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Clarke

HISTORY
OF
INTOLERANCE,
&c. &c. &c.

WATERFORD, PRINTED BY JOHN DILL.

HISTORY
OF
INTOLERANCE,
&c. &c. &c.

WATERFORD, PRINTED BY JOHN BULL.

HISTORY

INTOLERANCE

OF THE

CHURCH

OF ENGLAND

IN THE

SEVENTEENTH

CENTURY

BY

THOMAS CLARK

LONDON

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HISTORY
OF *From the author*
INTOLERANCE;
WITH
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
UNREASONABLENESS AND INJUSTICE
OF
PERSECUTION,
AND ON
THE EQUITY AND WISDOM
OF
UNRESTRICTED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

—•••••—
BY THOMAS CLARKE. ✕
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There is nothing certainly more unreasonable, more inconsistent with the rights of human nature, more contrary to the spirit and precepts of the christian religion, more iniquitous and unjust, more impolitic, than persecution. It is against natural religion, revealed religion, and sound policy. EARL MANSFIELD.

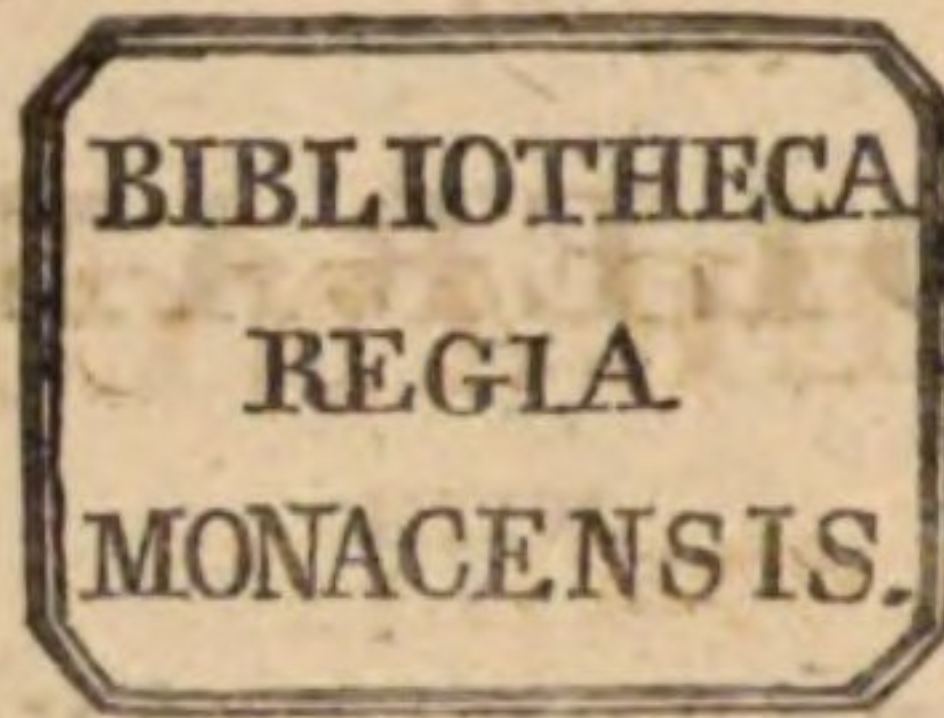
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WATERFORD:

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—
1819.

✕ Minister of the Baptist congregation
at Waterford.



BY THOMAS CLARKE

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PREFACE

TO THE READER

When a man writes for the purpose of instructing, he must be careful to make his subject plain and his reasoning clear. He must not only state his facts, but he must also explain them. He must not only state his conclusions, but he must also show how he arrived at them. He must not only state his opinions, but he must also show how he arrived at them. He must not only state his facts, but he must also explain them. He must not only state his conclusions, but he must also show how he arrived at them. He must not only state his opinions, but he must also show how he arrived at them.

It is a common error to suppose that the only way to make a subject plain is to use simple words. This is not true. A subject can be made plain by using simple words, but it can also be made plain by using complex words. The only way to make a subject plain is to use words that are understood by the reader. If the reader does not understand the words, the subject will not be plain.

PREFACE.

WHEN a man writes for the purpose of laying before the public certain sentiments, which appear to him both true and important, he cannot but feel some anxiety as to the light in which those sentiments may present themselves to his readers. Fallibility is a portion of our natural inheritance, which it is not in our power to exhaust or alienate; and we so often detect ourselves in mistakes, that our minds sometimes sink, involuntarily, into diffidence, even with respect to the most obvious and familiar truths. While, however, we are always liable to err, we ought diligently to guard against error, by cherishing the love, and addicting ourselves to the pursuit of truth.

It is some relief to timidity, that the opinions supported in these pages, appear to be free from that self-repugnance, which often confounds collusions of right and wrong, and to be in unison with the common sense and general interests of mankind: they are countenanced also by many of

the greatest men and first writers, both of our own and other countries; and (if I mistake not) the divine oracles give them the weighty suffrage of their high decisions.

The present state of Waterford, compared with the past, is a striking instance of the progress of religious liberty, and of the happy concomitants which attend it. In sixteen hundred and fifty-four, it was ordered, that no Roman Catholics should be allowed to trade in the city of Waterford, either within doors or without. In the following year, the magistrates of Waterford were commanded to arrest instantly all persons who resorted to the city, under the name of Quakers, and to transmit them as prisoners to Bristol.* Experience, the best of all instructors, has long since taught the inhabitants of this ancient and commercial city, that whatever evils may arise from bigotry and hatred, there is no danger to be apprehended from the toleration of differing, or even repugnant religions. Nay, it is doubtful, if the pleasure attending the exercise of the social affections is not enhanced by the diversity of religious

* Smith's History of Waterford, 155.

profession; and it is certain, that the cause of good morals is thereby promoted.

The exertions of the Protestants of Ireland to obtain for their Roman Catholic brethren a total repeal of the laws by which they are aggrieved, will form a lucid epocha in the annals of our country.

In ages fatal to liberty, the spirit of persecution entrenched itself so dexterously in the civil and religious institutions of Europe, that its expulsion cannot be a short and easy work. Many important advantages have been obtained; the standard of the enemy has been deserted by thousands, and he has been compelled to abandon many of his strong holds; but it still becomes the friends of freedom to be alive to their duty, and to pursue their conquests.

If the main sentiments defended in this work are just, any formal plea for the rights of Catholics in Protestant countries, or of Protestants in Catholic countries, is unnecessary. That which is the right of the whole, cannot be the exclusive right of any particular part of the community. If

the blessings of religious liberty ought to be general as the air we breathe, and common as the light and warmth of heaven;—if the advantages of a civil constitution ought to encourage, with impartial justice and beneficence, the talents and virtues of all its subjects, the distinctions of creeds and liturgies apart;—by what rules of policy or of jurisprudence are those advantages to be withheld from the Roman Catholic, or the Protestant, dissenters of Great Britain and Ireland?

Perhaps it will be said, that *there is no rule without an exception*. But the truth of this maxim may be flatly denied; and it may be boldly affirmed, that there are several rules so absolute, as to admit of no exception whatever. The controversy will then turn on the question, Whether the rule of religious liberty, is so perfect and universal, as to be ranked with those to which no exception can be admitted?

It is not uncommon for remonstrances in favour of the Roman Catholics, to be answered by the pithy and laconic aphorism, *Popery is always the same*; which, by being often urged, and seldom contradicted, has risen to the dignity of a political

axiom. The sense attached to these words, as applied to the Catholic claims, seems to be this :

Roman Catholics have always been very intolerant, and they are as intolerant now as they ever were ; they have refused, and they still refuse, religious liberty to others, and therefore ought not to receive it themselves.

Benevolent persons, though ever so well satisfied of the truth of these propositions, and of the fairness of the conclusion, must still wish to find themselves mistaken ; and therefore cannot be displeased at the adduction of a few facts calculated to establish a more hopeful belief. First, then, it is not true that Roman Catholics have always been intolerant. But on the contrary, there have been amongst them some shining examples of toleration, even in times most infamous for intolerant bigotry. For instance, the earls of Toulouse and Beziers not only tolerated the Albigenses, but also risked their dominions and lives in their defence.*

At a time when it was reckoned virtuous to plunder and kill the Jews, the prior of Dunstable granted to a number of them liberty to reside

* Jones's History of the Waldenses, Vol. II. 115—135.

within his lordship, and enjoy the privileges of it on the easy condition of their paying annually, two silver spoons.*

Cecil Calvert, baron of Baltimore, was the first christian legislator who gave equal privileges to all his subjects. This circumstance is the more remarkable, as most of those who emigrated with Lord Baltimore, were Roman Catholics as well as himself.† The famous George Buchanan was

• *The Rise, Fall, and Future Restoration of the Jews*, 40.—
“About this time, (A. D. 1349), the Jews throughout the world were arrested and burnt, and their fortunes seized by those lords under whose jurisdictions they had lived, except at Avignon, and the territories of the church dependent on the Pope. Each poor Jew, when he was able to hide himself, and arrive in that country, esteemed himself safe.”

Sir John Froissart's Chronicles, Vol. II. 264.

† The three first constitutions of equal liberty, were those of Baltimore, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania; the charter of Baltimore was obtained in 1632, that of Rhode Island in 1644, and that of Pennsylvania in 1681. It is probable, that the plan of each of these constitutions was original; and the names of Cecil Calvert, Roger Williams, and William Penn, are entitled to distinguished places in the records of fame; but, be it remembered, that the glory of being foremost in the path of just and liberal policy, is

patronized by Govianus of Portugal, and honoured and protected by the archbishop of Bourdeaux, notwithstanding its being known to them that he was a heretical fugitive from his own country.*

Superstition and cruelty have often gone together. We have an instance of their intimate union, in the character of Cortes, the conqueror of the Mexican empire, who was very anxious for the *conversion* of the people whom he was so ready to *deceive and plunder*. At Zempoalla, he commanded his soldiers to overturn the altars and destroy the idols of the place, and to erect a crucifix and an image of the virgin Mary in their room. At Tlascala he was about to do the same, but his ignorant zeal was restrained by Bartholomew de Olmedo, chaplain to the expedition, who, after insisting on the imprudence of such an attempt in a large city, newly reconciled, and filled with people equally warlike and superstitious, declared,

due, not to the Quaker, nor to the Baptist, but to the ROMAN CATHOLIC.—*Clarkson's Memoirs of the Life of Penn, Vol. I. 336.*—*Ivimey's History of the English Baptists, Vol. I. 218.*—*Encyc. Brit. article Calvert.*

* British Plutarch, Vol. I. 409.

that the proceedings at Zempoalla, had always appeared to him precipitate and unjust; and that religion was not to be propagated by the sword, or infidels converted by violence.*

The christian religion was planted in Hungary, in the tenth century. In the sixteenth century, the Reformation made great progress in that country, but its civil and ecclesiastical establishments continued exclusively catholic, until the year seventeen hundred and ninety-one. In that year, the political privileges of the protestants were put on a perfect equality with those of the catholics. When the Diet agreed upon a final settlement, the rights of the protestants were confirmed by a majority of two hundred and seven, there being only eighty-four members who voted against them: one hundred and eighty-one of their most efficient friends were *magnates* or nobles, and the greater part of them Roman Catholics †

* Robertson's History of America, Vol. II. 35-45.—The *Plas-calans* had no objection to admit the gods of the Spaniards, but they were astounded at the impious proposal of rejecting their own: in this particular, the polytheism of the new world was the counterpart of that of the old.

† State of Ireland considered, 1810, 15-17.

Other facts might be adduced to show the injustice of charging Roman Catholics indiscriminately with a spirit of persecution. But supposing that the Roman Catholics of past ages had been animated by one unvaried spirit of bigotry and persecution, would it thence follow, that their descendants of the present day ought to be treated as their forefathers treated others? Is it the province of christian justice and charity, to visit the sins of the fathers upon successive generations of their children? How little that is desirable in this life would many Protestants now enjoy, if they enjoyed no more than their venerable ancestors were willing to grant?

The British colonies in North America were originated by the scandalous intolerance of a protestant government. That oppression must have been truly insupportable, which induced a number of sober minded men, total strangers to that enthusiasm which is imparted by the spirit of adventure, to turn their eyes from the land of their nativity, from the homes which had descended to them from their fathers, to a transatlantic settlement, in a region unknown and inhabited by savages. As our non-conformist emigrants braved

the mighty winds and waves of the western ocean, to get beyond the reach of spiritual courts and penal laws, it naturally occurs to us, that religious liberty would be the animating principle of their civil institutions. How is this expectation supported by matter of fact? The following are some of the laws made in the dominion of New-haven, one of the general divisions of Connecticut, at its first settlement :

“ No one shall be a freeman, or give a vote,
 “ unless he be converted, and a member in full
 “ communion of one of the churches allowed in
 “ this dominion.

“ No man shall hold any office, who is not
 “ sound in the faith,* and faithful to this domi-
 “ nion ; and whoever gives a vote to such a per-
 “ son, shall pay a fine of one pound. For a
 “ second offence he shall be disfranchised.

• As being in the faith was a qualification for office, these legislators were certainly right in insisting on *soundness* in the faith. Those with us, who hold offices in virtue of their faith, ought to be examined on that article previous to their admission, and a departure from the faith ought to be attended with the forfeiture of their offices.

“ Each freeman shall swear by the blessed God,
 “ to bear true allegiance to this dominion, and
 “ that Jesus is the only king.

“ No Quaker, or dissenter from the established
 “ worship of this dominion, shall be allowed to
 “ give a vote for the election of magistrates, or
 “ any officer.

“ No food or lodging shall be afforded to a
 “ Quaker, Adamite, or other heretic.

“ If any person turns Quaker, he shall be ba-
 “ nished, and not suffered to return, but upon
 “ pain of death.

“ No priest shall abide in the dominion. He
 “ shall be banished, and suffer death on his return.
 “ Priests may be seized by any one without a
 “ warrant.”

Similar laws were made in several of the Ame-
 rican states ; and they were not made merely to
 be suspended *in terrorem* over the heads of the
 guilty ; they actually came down in all their ven-
 geance, on many hapless victims.

“The true grounds of religious liberty,” says Mr. Morse, “were not embraced or understood at this time by any sect. While all disclaimed persecution for the sake of conscience, a regard for the public peace, and for the preservation of the church of Christ from infection, together with the obstinacy of heretics, were urged in justification of that, which, stripped of all its disguises, the light of nature and the laws of Christ, in the most solemn manner condemn. Mr. Roger Williams, a minister who came over to Salem in sixteen hundred and thirty, was charged with holding a variety of errors, and was at length banished from the then colony of Massachusetts, and afterwards from Plymouth, *as a disturber of the peace of the church and commonwealth*. In sixteen hundred and thirty-four, he had several treaties with Myantonomo and Canonicus, the Narragansett Sachems, who assured him he should not want for land. In the same year, he and twenty others, his followers, who were voluntary exiles, came to a place called by the Indians *Mooshawsick*, and by him *Providence*. Here they settled, and though secured from the Indians by the terror of the English, they suffered greatly for a considerable time through fatigue and want. The

unhappy divisions and contentions in Massachusetts still prevailed; and in the year thirty-six, governor Winthrop strove to exterminate the opinions which he disapproved.—Such as were banished by the court from Massachusetts, joined by a number of their friends, went in quest of a new settlement, and came to Providence, where they were kindly entertained by Mr. Roger Williams, who, by the assistance of Sir Henry Vane, jun. procured for them, from the Indians, Aquidnick, now Rhode Island. In the year forty-three, the people being destitute of *patent*, or legal authority, Mr. Williams went to England as agent, and by the assistance of Sir Henry Vane, obtained of the earl of Warwick, then governor and admiral of all the plantations, *a free and absolute charter of civil incorporation, by the name of THE INCORPORATION OF PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS IN NARRAGANSETT BAY.* This lasted until the charter granted by Charles II. in sixty-three, by which the incorporation was styled, *THE ENGLISH COLONY OF RHODE ISLAND, AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS IN NEW ENGLAND.* This charter, without any essential alteration, has remained the foundation of their government ever since.*

* Morse's American Geography, 209.—The charter itself, which

It is incumbent on the legislators who invade the sanctuary of conscience, in order to restrain unauthorized doctrines and novel ceremonies, to determine with themselves in the first place, whether it is their duty to prosecute what they undertake, to its *last extremity*. The failure of a gentle remedy suggests the necessity of a stronger; and the sturdy heretic, who refuses to acknowledge his guilt, by paying a fine or going into exile, is instantly involved in the additional guilt of contumacy. The atrocious insult calls upon the judges of the earth to arise and vindicate, by adequate penalties, the insulted majesty of the laws.

When the Quakers first appeared in the state of Massachusetts, there were no statutes in being against them; but in virtue of the general laws against heresy, they were all banished. Severer laws were soon enacted, which ordained that Quakers of the male sex, should, on the first and second conviction, lose their ears,—that those of the female sex, should be severely whipped; and that

is dated the fourteenth year of Charles II. and fills eighteen octavo pages, may be seen in *The Constitutions of the several Independent States of America, published by order of Congress*, 68.

on a third conviction, whether male or female, they should have their tongues bored through with a red-hot iron. Under these revolting cruelties, the Quakers multiplied so fast, that the government deemed it imperative on them to denounce *death* against all such refractory culprits as presumed to return to the colony after being banished. By this infamous law, the natural and genuine result of the intolerant casuistry of the puritans, four persons were executed.

Special laws were enacted against the Quakers in the province of Connecticut, equally severe with those of Massachusetts. It is observable, that some of the puritans pleaded the *obligations of conscience*, as a stimulus to persecution, not considering, that nothing is more dangerous than a misinformed conscience. The way in which their consciences were abused, appears from the following circumstance: the general court of Connecticut assembled at New-haven at the commencement of their colony, not having had time to frame a code of laws, enacted, that, *the judicial laws of God, as they were delivered to Moses, and as they are a fence to the moral, being neither typical or ceremonial, nor having any reference to*

*Canaan, should be accounted of moral equity, and generally bind all offenders, and be rule to all the courts in this jurisdiction, until they be branched out into particulars hereafter. This fatal error was very general among the Puritans. Hence, when the court of Massachusetts endeavoured to justify their persecution of the Quakers, to the government of England, they pleaded, among other things, the law of God. Mr. Roger Williams, who contended for religious liberty as the birthright of every man, saw, at the beginning, the evils likely to emanate from the mistaken jurisprudence of Massachusetts, and observed, in a letter to the governor, Endicot, that by his principles, he was bound to put to death, such as he counted heretics, seducers, and blasphemers; and that he could not otherwise be faithful to his conscience.**

* Sewel's History of the Quakers, Vol. I. 457.—Ivimey's History of the English Baptists, Vol. I. 219.—Encyc. Brit. article *Connecticut*.—The Abbé Raynal has given a singular manifesto, transcribed (he affirms) from the registers of New England:

“It is a circumstance universally acknowledged, that the custom
“of wearing long hair, after the manner of immoral persons and of
“the savage Indians, can only have been introduced into England,
“in sacrilegious contempt of the express command of God, who

The ferment excited by the persecution of Quakers and Baptists, was scarcely allayed by the interposition of the mother country, when a new source of anarchy and wretchedness was opened by the busy genius of error and fanaticism. As by the judicial laws of Moses, no witch was to be suffered to live, the adoption of those laws would, of course, produce a horror of witchcraft,

“ declares, that it is a shameful practice for any man who has the
 “ least care for his soul to wear long hair. As this abomination
 “ excites the indignation of all pious persons, we, the magistrates,
 “ in our zeal for the purity of the faith, do expressly and authentically declare, that we condemn the impious custom of letting the
 “ hair grow; a custom which we look upon to be very indecent
 “ and dishonest, which horribly disguises men, and is offensive to
 “ modest and sober persons, inasmuch as it corrupts good manners. We, therefore, being justly incensed against this scandalous custom, do desire, advise, and earnestly request, all the elders of our continent, zealously to shew their aversion from this
 “ odious practice, to exert all their power to put a stop to it, and
 “ especially to take care that the members of their churches be not
 “ infected with it; in order that those persons, who, notwithstanding these rigorous prohibitions, and the means of correction, that
 “ shall be used on this account, shall still persist in this custom, may have both God and man at the same time against them.”

Philosophical and Political History of the European Settlements in the East and West Indies, Book xvii. 323.

and that horror, acting on sensible and delicate nerves, would produce convulsions; and those convulsions, in a time when fear and folly had displaced reason, might pass for undoubted proofs of satanic power. Thus a destructive epidemic was generated by the very means employed to prevent its existence. Consternation and despondency spread from house to house, and from bosom to bosom; each one trembled for himself and for those he loved; the innocence of youth and the decrepitude of age were no security from suspicion; the prisons were crowded; executions were frequent; some fled, and others feared to fly; when, all on a sudden, the magistrates stopped, informations were rejected, the prisons opened, and the tempest ceased. The remorse of the living could not restore the dead, and nothing remained but to appoint a day of humiliation, and implore the mercy of Heaven.*

* The law against witchcraft and divination was a branch of the general law against idolatry; and was designed to preserve the Israelites from the superstitious prejudices of their neighbours. Compare Deut. xviii. 9-13. Isaiah viii. 19. Some polemics appeal to the Pentateuch as containing irrefragable proof of the reality of the black art. Did Moses, say they, prohibit, under solemn sanctions, a crime which never existed? But, might not witchcraft exist,

We have here the strange, but instructive spectacle of a people, who had nobly faced the perils of emigration to a new and unknown hemisphere; who had surmounted by patience and industry, the hardships and difficulties of their first settlement; who were now happily situated in the midst of the abundance, the beauty, and the magnificence of the creation; and who wanted nothing but generous policy and brotherly love to ensure prosperity and happiness—reduced to the verge of destruction by the operation of a superfluous law.

It is glorious, however, for the English colonies in the new world, that they soon abjured some of the worst errors which they had taken with them from the old,—that they were true to the principles of liberty as far as they understood them—that they improved their government as they extended their knowledge—and that they have long since been

and be a crime, while at the same time it was a system of knavery and imposition like the major part of that idolatry to which it was allied? There is scarcely any thing which has been more extensively and perniciously abused by the ignorance or artifice of superstition, than those political institutions of the jews which were designed to render them a *peculiar* people.

firmly fixed on the broad basis of impartial justice.

The minds and hearts of Englishmen, of all denominations, are pretty generally on the side of religious liberty; yet without looking very far back into our history, we may see some occurrences which should stop our hand, when about to fling a stone at our neighbour. Such, for instance, as the inquisitorial proceedings of the High Commission Court, instituted by Queen Elizabeth; the ecclesiastical pedantry and oppression of James the First; and the arbitrary and virulent acts of the church of England, under the auspices of Charles the First and archbishop Laud. What age or nation can boast of a more tremendous explosion of intolerant frenzy, than that of the London mob of seventeen hundred and eighty, collected by Lord George Gordon? And the Birmingham rioters of ninety-one showed, very plainly, what they would do, but for the mighty arm of law and government. Still, however, the legal extension of religious liberty, which has already taken place under the long and eventful reign of George the Third, will render it a splendid æra in the history of England.

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2000 as 300 represent it
 J. S. H. K. K. K.

Scotland has for some centuries been spirited, emulous, and successful, in the race of improvement; but in respect of intolerance, she cannot say, *I am innocent.*

Hear the Edinburgh Review :*—" With regard to the Protestant church, which was finally established at the Revolution in Scotland, where, from the first introduction of the Reformation, it had been fondly cherished by the majority of the nation, the vehemence of its intolerant spirit during a long period is well known. Its celebrated founder, John Knox, proclaimed the awful sentence, which was loudly re-echoed by his disciples, that the idolater should die the death: in plain English, that every catholic should be hanged. The bare toleration of Prelacy, of Protestant Prelacy, was the guilt of soul-murder. It was this church that framed the Solemn League and Covenant for the extirpation of Prelacy by the sword, and enjoined it to be subscribed by all persons, under pain of excommunication. And during the negotiations for the Union, it was this church, who, in a formal petition, besought the Parliament of Scotland, that

* For February, 1816, 55.

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 'as they would not involve themselves and the Scots nation in guilt,' they should not consent to the establishment of the English hierarchy and ceremonies—where?—in Scotland?—that was perfectly understood—But no, not even in England!"

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 Many other facts and considerations might be brought forward to show that the persecutions which, in different countries, and on various pretexts, have thinned the world of fifty millions of its inhabitants, are not to be ascribed to any particular set of religious opinions, but to the fatal operation of bad governments, to ignorance, avarice, and fanaticism.

Waterford, April 12, 1819.

HISTORY
OF
INTOLERANCE, &c.

CHAPTER I.

General and introductory Remarks.

SOME, probably will ask, Why in the present tranquillity has the author brought forward a Subject on which there has been much controversy? I answer, that this Work does not proceed from faction or violence; that it aims at neither; and that, therefore, tranquillity is at once congenial with its nature, and favourable to its design. We are now happily at rest from foreign wars and intestine feuds, and what should hinder our bringing candid and unbiassed minds to the examination of a subject in which we are equally and mutually interested?

Religious persecution has been a prolific source of misery to the human race. There is scarcely any nation or society in existence which

has not at one time or other, suffered, or inflicted the evils of Intolerance. Is it not time for all to abandon a course of vicious folly, which has successively plunged each in shame and wretchedness? How long shall we applaud and violate the golden rule, of doing to others as (on an exchange of circumstances) we should wish others to do to ourselves?

How often has the world been despoiled of a great part of its living wisdom and virtue, by the ruthless malice and sanctimonious hypocrisy of persecutors? Could we recall the victims of persecution from the untimely graves in which they found repose, and incorporate them in one nation, what a nation would they constitute?*

When it is considered that a great diversity of sentiment has ever existed on religious sub-

* Torquemada, the first Inquisitor general, brought into the Inquisition, no less than eighty thousand persons in the space of fourteen years. The promulgation of Charles the Fifth's edict against the reformers, was followed by the destruction of fifty thousand persons in the Netherlands alone.

In the wars between the dissenters of France and their intolerant oppressors, a million of lives were lost.

In the reign of Mary of England, two hundred and eighty-four persons were put to death for heresy, besides numbers who suffered long confinement and incredible misery. Bishop Challenor has compiled memoirs of missionary priests, who suffered death in England from the year 1577 to the year 1684. According to this gentleman, there suffered on account of religion, one hundred and twenty-four priests and sixty-three laymen and women, between 1577 and 1603, in the reign of Elizabeth, and almost as many more, between the first year of James I. and the last of Charles II.

jects—that all attempts to coerce people into uniformity have proved abortive—that from the constitution of our minds and our circumstances, it is not possible, and that if it were, (as far as we can judge of its effects without witnessing them) it would not be beneficial; it may seem superfluous to write against it. Let it be remembered, however, that the absurdity of persecution might have been known in ages past—that though each successive century has brought additional proof of its futility, it has not yet ceased; and that the pertinacity of its friends in defiance of the most discouraging repulses, requires equal pertinacity in its enemies.

In this judgment we are supported, by observing that some fugitives from persecution have turned persecutors—that in some denominations, where Intolerance is discarded in principle, there is a leaning to it in practice—that we are apt to carry the maxims and spirit of the world into the church; and that, though all profess religion, there are many who do not seem to be sensible that all violence in religion is irreligious, and that whoever is wrong, the persecutor cannot be right.

There is in fining, torturing and killing men on account of religion, something so grossly irrational, and so atrociously cruel and impious, that to one unacquainted with the history of our species, it might seem libellous to assert that it had been done. Nature revolts at the thought of it, yet strange to tell, it has been deliberately defended.

Is it possible that any adepts in dialectick artifice can *really* impose on themselves or others in this matter? Can taking away a man's life because he chooses to worship God as he thinks right, be called by any softer name than that of murder? If a thing morally wrong cannot be politically right, can it be religiously right?—If it is an outrage on common sense, civil government, and the natural and inalienable rights of man, what aspect does it present, or by what name shall it be called in religion? The sophistical pleas adduced in its favour, are pleas to do evil to the bodies and estates of men, that good may come to their souls, and to sin against their lives, that grace may abound by their deaths.* Yet this assassinating devotion has at this day in some countries a regularly concerted establishment—a

* Sir John Oldcastle, Baron of Cobham, was the first martyr among the English Nobility. He was a decided advocate for the principles of Wickliff. In the reign of Henry V. he was accused of heresy. As he belonged to the King's household, the Archbishop at the head of the dignified clergy waited on his Majesty and begged him for Christ's sake, to suffer them to put his servant Lord Cobham to death. The King was averse to shed blood in the cause of religion, observing that violence was more destructive of truth than of error. The King requested the clergy to postpone their proceedings, that he might admonish his servant; which he accordingly did, but in vain. Lord Cobham persisted in refusing all spiritual allegiance to his Holiness, and was therefore abandoned to the tender mercies of his enemies. They suspended him by the waist, and roasted him alive over a slow fire.

set of sombre ministers and a complete apparatus of torture.

In the following sheets, an attempt is made to administer an antidote for this bane of national quietude and prosperity, and to pour the balm of social love and confidence into the wounds it has inflicted. History, rich with the spoils of time, supplies materials. Ages have elapsed; cities have risen to magnificence and sunk to heaps of ruins; kingdoms and empires have been formed and annihilated, and with them have disappeared the proudest monuments of human power and glory. Observation and experience are the handmaids of wisdom; let us see what agency intolerance has had in these revolutions, and if possible extract from the viper a cure for his sting.

We know from unquestionable authority, that the final catastrophe of the most ancient and most favoured nation, of which we have any authentic record, was at once foreboded and accelerated by persecution.

The junction of religion with the pomp and power of government, together with the rivalry and dissensions resulting thence, divided the Roman empire, and made it a more easy prey to its barbarous invaders.

The illiberal way in which dissenters were treated in Poland and France, forwarded the dismemberment of the former, and the revolution of the latter.* What became of the magnificence

* When the protestants became numerous in Poland, a law

of Louis *le Grand* after the revocation of the edict of Nantz?

I do not affirm that the rapid wane of French glory from this period, was owing entirely to that iniquitous violation of national faith, but it is certain that France was materially injured by it, and that the remaining part of that proud and ungrateful monarch's reign, was a series of defeats and disasters. In the days of Philip II. how terrific was the name and how enormous the strength of Spain? But what among the nations of Europe is she now? Her intolerance and

was passed, which enacted, that differences in religious opinions should excite no contention among the subjects of the kingdom—that all the Poles, without discrimination, should be capable of holding public offices and trusts under the government; and that future Kings should swear expressly to cultivate the internal tranquillity of the realm, and to cherish, without distinction, their subjects of all persuasions. In 1764, a decree was passed, which prohibited the *Dissidents* the free exercise of their religion, and excluded them from all posts and places under the government.

In 1767, the *Dissidents* formed two grand confederacies against the intolerant government, which had deprived them of their rights; they also called upon the nations of Europe to assist them. The result was, the devastation of a fine country, the partition of an ancient kingdom, and the effusion of much blood.—From the flames kindled by the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, scarcely a century had elapsed when the flames of the Revolution broke out. The clergy of the established church of France were incessant in their endeavours to obtain the extermination of the Huguenots, who, perceiving that there was no prospect of security under the existing government, became active agents in forwarding the Revolution.

oppression goaded the Netherlands into a revolt and rebellion, which ended (gloriously for them) in their independence. Philip gave an epitome of his reign, when he chided his physicians for their reluctance to draw a few drops of blood from the veins of a king, who had made rivers of it flow from heretics.*

To shed the blood of English heretics was no doubt, one motive to the equipment of the Invincible Armada. This prodigious armament, consisting of one hundred and fifty large ships, on which were embarked the strength of Spain, and the flower of the Spanish nobility, was dispersed and destroyed, not so much by the power of man, as by the providence of God.

In the tumult of persecution, the voice of justice and of mercy has been drowned; the peaceful toil of husbandry and art has been suspended; fertile countries have been desolated; cities sacked and reduced to ashes; villages and villas demolished; property to an incalculable amount destroyed; and

* To check the growing empire of heresy, this ill advised monarch extended the blessings of the Inquisition to the Netherlands, and that at a time, when the spirit of Belgic liberty was awaking from the slumber of ages.

It was owing to the impertinent interference of that detestable court, that the Moors of the kingdom of Grenada were excited to a general insurrection, and that the ravages of war devastated that fertile region.

Europe was too contracted for the sphere of Philip's intolerance, and therefore he transmitted the Inquisition to America.

millions of human beings, as fond of life as ourselves, have miserably perished. All this and much more, to promote religion! This reminds me of a sentence in the speech of the Scythian ambassadors to Alexander:—"If you are a god," say they, "you ought to bestow benefits on mortals, and not to take from them that which is their own."* Contending for the faith by the methods adverted to, we commit crimes which ought to put atheism to the blush. It is time to desist from supporting religion by violating its precepts—from evincing our love to God by hating and persecuting our neighbour, and from preparing for another world by multiplying sins and sorrows in this.

The misery of man is great enough without its being enhanced by tyranny over conscience. Liberty and contentment are two great sources of human happiness. The lark rises at pleasure, and in such notes as nature teaches, warbles its song to heaven: thus absolutely free as to all coercive control and every human tribunal, ought to be the mind of man in the service of God.

To attempt controlling the judgment and conscience by penal laws, is at once a piece of injustice and impiety. It is injustice, as being an infringement on the natural and indefeisible rights of men. To employ our faculties on religious subjects without restraint or compulsion from the potentates of the world, is one of our inalienable pri-

* Si deus es, tribuere mortalibus beneficia debes, non sua eripere.

Q. Curtius, Vit. Alex. Lib. Sept. 169. 1716.

not religion
but
superstition
a security
its own

true!
but will
man?
The lark
is no
free agent
Man is!

vileges and highest dignities. To be capable of religion, is the most characteristic distinction of our nature—a distinction which is rendered null and void, if despoiled of this privilege. Any individual, government, or legislature, which pretends to *grant* this privilege, is guilty of folly and presumption; and any one that interferes with it, is chargeable with impious temerity. Legislative authority and penal justice in matters of faith, are the high and awful prerogatives of God. No matter by what name that man is called who sits in the temple of God exhibiting himself as God, he is an impious usurper—he is the man of sin, and will be revealed the son of perdition.

The checkered circumstances which diversify the lot of mankind, cause no enlargement or diminution of this sacred right; it is equal in the savage and the sage—in the most abject mendicant and the most august monarch. Men who pride themselves in their circumstances, ought to be humbled at the consideration, that circumstances make not the man.

Any one who will give himself the trouble to set down the ideas which belong to the words, "God," and "Man," will find that from the essential perfections of the former, and the communicated attributes of the latter, the claims of religious liberty necessarily result. To God, the first cause and the ultimate end of all things—to that great Being whose greatness is unsearchable—whose almighty "fiat" commanded all

agreed
but what
are the
consequences

worlds into existence—who, enthroned over the immensity of his works, supports and governs them according to the eternal purposes of his will—to the benignant father of our spirits, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and by whom our future, our eternal destination, will be fixed,—belong that sacred awe, that silent submission, and that supreme deference and love which comprise the soul and substance of religious worship.

Sanctify, says the prophet, the *Lord of Hosts himself*, and let *him* be your fear. Thou, says the Psalmist, whose name is Jehovah, art most high over all the earth—*thou*, even *thou* art to be feared. Here is an object of veneration proposed, before whom the great ones of the earth shrink into nothing. And I say unto you, my friends, says the greatest of all prophets and teachers, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do : but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear ; fear him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* The homage due to the invisible King, is very distinct from the obedience which belongs to civil magistrates. This important distinction is implied in those memorable words which confounded the Pharisees and the Herodians, Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God, the things which are God's.†

* Luke xii. 4. 5.

† Matt. xxii. 21.

As the high perfections of the Creator, require a peculiar species of devotion, to which the most exalted creatures have no pretensions, so our nature and circumstances supply many motives for rendering it. Not to worship the first great Spirit, by whose inspiration we have intelligence, and by whose power and munificence we are sustained, is to show an ungrateful forgetfulness of our benefactor. We must be strangely thoughtless too, if the shivering frailty of our bodies, and our continual exposure to disease and death, do not put us in mind of the giver and arbiter of life. The universality of religion, of some kind or other, evinces its consonance with nature. It is long since Maximus of Tyre, the famous instructor of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, observed, that "If one travel the world, it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without coin, and without schools and theatres; but a city without a temple, or one that useth no worship, no one ever saw." The exquisite mechanism, figure, strength and activity of the human frame, are much to be admired; but it is to the gifts of speech, reason and immortality that we look for our chief dignity. Of these three perfections of man, the last is the chief; for, of what avail are the brilliant endowments of reason and eloquence, if they are but for a moment! It is not easy to define, with precision, the boundaries of reason and instinct; some animals have so much adroitness and some

men so little: in the former instinct is so acute, and in the latter reason so dull, that we are ready to doubt, whether rationality be the badge which distinguishes man from beast. Philo, the philosophic Jew, says, that he only who is actuated with hope towards God, is a man; and that they who are destitute of this hope are not men.

Lord Herbert affirms, that upon accurate search, religion and faith appear the only ultimate differences of man.* An ancient prophet called on his nation, to remember the vanity of idols and to *show themselves men*,† i. e. by worshipping the true God. In the Old Testament, the fear of God, like love in the New, comprises the whole of religion, and is the *summum bonum* of man. Job, after giving an animated description of the riches contained in the earth, and of the industrious ingenuity of the miner, in finding them out, asks, But where shall wisdom be found? He proceeds to descant on the worth of wisdom, as far above silver, gold or rubies, and on the nice arrangements which the beneficent Creator has established in his works; and concludes, but to man he (God) said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding.‡

* According to this doctrine, by whatever steps any proceed in the denial of a Deity, they advance by the same to abandon their own humanity; and by saying there is *no God*, proclaim themselves *no men*. *Howe's Works, Vol I. 99. 1810.*

† Isaiah xlv. 8.

‡ Job xxviii. 28.

One fatal mistake which has contributed to support the throne of Intolerance, is to suppose, that people may be made religious by force; that torturing and mangling the body may benefit the soul. To me it appears much more self-evident, that if a man has not a religion of his own choice, he can have none at all. A man may be constrained to dissemble what he really is, and to affect to be what he is not; but he cannot be compelled to be a servant of God. Children in religion ought to know, that God is the happy God, and that he does not admit of a miserable and slavish service; that he is a spirit, and requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Whether worshipping in truth signify, worshipping in sincerity, or in the simplicity of the gospel, in distinction from the complicated forms of the law, is immaterial: the human spirit, and all that can be of service to it, in the adoration of the divine Spirit, is equally beyond the sphere of violence.

To employ force in propagating religion, or maintaining it where it has been propagated, is to offer it a dishonourable and pernicious service. To attempt compelling a man to become religious is itself a piece of irreligion, and the absurdity of such an attempt, is as flagrant as the iniquity of it. The timid may be compelled to a feigned assumption of what they neither understand nor approve; but the judgment, the conscience, and the affections, the abodes of religion or its opposite, are not within the reach of compulsion: error

and vice have retreats from which nothing but truth and grace can banish them. The conduct of the religious despot is preposterous and infamous: his machinations and efforts tend to the extinction of all which is free, noble, and ingenuous in man; and to the production of those pests to society, suspicion, servility, deceit and hypocrisy. Even supposing the principles and tendency of a religion to be good, the imposition of it by force, is adapted to produce effects the contrary of itself. But any religion which is founded in truth, and which has an intrinsic power of improving our nature and condition, must have an intrinsic hostility to bribery and compulsion. Christianity spread and triumphed, not by the physical or numerical strength of its ministers; but by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, and by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.* The acts of faith and obedience to which the gospel calls us, are a reasonable service, to which we are to be drawn by the mercies of God, and not driven by the terrors of men.†

See the eastern impostor presenting the sword with one hand and the Koran with the other to convert the infidels. How unlike to him who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save—who shed no blood but his own!

* 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7.

† Rom. xii. 1.

Christianity is much more disparaged by being confounded with dragooning apostles, holy wars and penal statutes, than by all the jests, quirks and slanders with which profane wittlings have assailed it. But how do they read the New Testament who confound things so unlike to each other?

Light has as much to do with darkness as the the genius of Christianity has with that of Intolerance.

If any one might use constraint, Christ might, as the works he performed in the course of his ministry demonstrated that his mission was divine; yet, when surrounded with the glory of miraculous power, and when offering eternal life to creatures over whom he had an absolute control, what a tender and scrupulous regard did he shew to their liberty. If any man *thirst*, said he, let him come to me and drink.—Blessed are they that *hunger and thirst* after righteousness, for *they* shall be filled.—And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw* all unto me.—Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man *hear my voice and open the door*, I will come in: they are thieves and robbers who break open doors and enter by force. When God's anointed King sent forth his ambassadors among the nations, they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, warning every man and teaching every man—they spoke the truth in love—and knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuaded men. Their ministry indeed was a warfare, but it was a benevolent one; its object

was not to maim the persons or injure the estates of men, but to enlighten and sanctify their minds.

As coercing men into a profession of religion, is totally repugnant to the spirit, precepts, and precedents of Christianity, so it has been a source of many crimes and calamities. At the sanguinary shrine of persecution, thousands of the most estimable members of society have been wantonly sacrificed. How many of whom the world was not worthy, have wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented:—how many have endured mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments; have been stoned, sawn asunder, or slain with the sword!

If this infernal phrensy which has hurried men to the commission of so many impious atrocities, be curable, its cure ought to be attempted; and in the attempt, every man who is not inspired with ill will to his neighbour, ought to co-operate.*

* Galileo was born in 1564. In 92, he was chosen Professor of Mathematics at Padua, where he either invented or greatly improved the telescope. In 1611, Cosmo II. Grand Duke of Tuscany, sent for him to Pisa, where he made him Professor of Mathematics, with a handsome salary; and soon after inviting him to Florence, gave to him the office and title of *principal Philosopher and Mathematician to his Highness*. In 1612, having observed some solar spots, he printed that discovery the following year at Rome; in this and in some other pieces, he ventured to assert the truth of the Copernican system, and brought several new arguments to confirm it. For these he was cited before the Inquisition, but was released after some months' imprisonment, on a simple promise that he would renounce his heretical

For this purpose, we ought in the composure of reason and reflection, to store our minds with just ideas on the subject, lest, under the impetus of mistaken zeal, or the deception of specious names and fair pretences, we should be induced to speak unadvisedly, or act illiberally.

opinions. In 1632, having published at Florence, his "Dialogues of the two greatest Systems of the World, the Ptolemaic and Copernican," he was again cited and committed to the prison of the Inquisition at Rome. On the 23d of June that year, the Congregation assembled; and in his presence pronounced sentence against him and his books, obliging him to abjure his errors in the most solemn manner; committed him to the prison of their Office during pleasure; and enjoined him, as a penance for three years, to repeat once a week, the seven penitential psalms; reserving to themselves, however, the power of moderating or changing the punishment. On this sentence he was detained prisoner till 1634, and his Dialogues of the Astronomical Systems were burnt at Rome.

Can we wonder that ignorance spread her mantle over Europe, when the extension of knowledge was so hazardous?

George Buchanan, preceptor to King James, so well known by his Latin version of the Psalms, narrowly escaped strangling or burning for heresy and atheism. His real crime was writing a Latin Poem entitled "Somnium," in which he satirised the ignorance and idleness of the Franciscans. Having eluded the vigilance of his keepers, he fled to England. At this time Henry VIII. was defending his faith by his sword; and our poet thought it prudent to make his escape to Paris, where to his sad surprise he met with Cardinal Beaton, who headed the persecution against him in Scotland. In those miserable days, a liberal man should go to some solitude to find rest for the sole of his foot. In purity and elegance of style, and in strength and elevation of thought, Buchanan ranks with the best writers of the best ages.

It is generally supposed, that at this day, the religious liberties of men are well understood, both as to their principles and extent. We shall have occasion to notice occurrences which make it rather doubtful, whether they are understood so well, or respected so much as might be wished. Whatever has been, may be again. We are apt to look on the disasters and deaths which fill the annals of intolerance, as the traveller looks back on the perils of the deep, when he has made the desired port.

If prudence has not forsaken us, we shall watch the evolutions of an adversary, whose stratagems and violence were so fatal to our forefathers. The busy and malignant passions which, in generations past, disturbed the peace, and created scenes of anarchy and terror, will, under the auspices of prejudice and partial policy, resume their evil offices, unless restrained by reason and government.*

* William Penn, the justly renowned planter and legislator of Pennsylvania, was fined for nonconformity at sixteen years of age, and was afterwards imprisoned in the Tower and in Newgate for the same crime.

The liberal sentiments and manly conduct of William Penn, in the cause of religious liberty, rendered him one of the brightest and fairest luminaries of his age. The restless spirit of persecution induced this great and benevolent man to quit the land of his nativity. A contemporary historian states, that, "finding his friends, the Quakers, were harassed over England, by spiritual courts, he resolved to put himself at the head of as many as would go with him, and conduct them to a place, where

Of the enlightened inhabitants of Europe, some of all denominations are decidedly averse to persecution, both in theory and practice.

they would be no longer subjected to sufferings on account of their religion."

Oldmixon, as quoted in Clarkson's life of Penn, Vol. I. 263.

Mr. Isaac Watts, the father of Doctor Watts, kept a boarding school in Southampton, which was held in such high repute, that gentlemen's sons were sent to it from America and the West Indies. His virtues were many and great, yet he was guilty of dissenterism, and was imprisoned more than once for this crime. During his confinement, his wife was known to sit on a stone near the prison door, suckling her son Isaac.

Doctor Priestly was the most spirited and indefatigable philosopher of the last century. His well-known devotion to civil liberty, made him obnoxious to the ill will of some of his degenerate countrymen; but it was chiefly the spirit of bigotry and intolerance, which raised that storm, from which this distinguished scholar sought an asylum beyond the Atlantic. "Calumnies," says Mr. Hall, "continued to be propagated, until they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever memorable æra in the annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with astonishment and regret, the outrage sustained by philosophy, in the most enlightened of countries, and in the first of her sons."—*Apology for the Freedom of the Press, page 90.*

"We have beheld with mingled indignation and regret, that spirit of persecution, which kindled the flames of ninety-one, spreading through the realm, its baneful influence, and pursuing into his retreat, the friend and ornament of his country."

"A spirit, which was thought in this country, at least, to be for ever extinct, inspiring its barbarous violence unto a lawless mob, drove you from this place, and broke those bonds, which form the sacred connection of a pastor with his flock."—*Address of the United Congregations of Protestant Dissenters, at Birmingham, March 25, 1794.*

There are others, who, though they have suspended the practice, have not abjured the principle. There are others, who only wait for a convenient season, who in these days of knowledge and civilization, are with difficulty kept from tampering with heretical blood.—Sons of Nero and St. Dominic, in whose dark minds and brutish hearts the principles of intolerance find congenial habitations, and who would gladly mingle the fervours of their charity with the fires of an Auto de Fé.

Some men are applauded for virtues, of which they are destitute. This is the case, when they are honored for their liberality, who refrain from persecuting their neighbours from fear of punishment, or out of indifference to all religion, rather than from deference to the sacredness of religious liberty.

Do not dissenters in some places, enjoy indemnity from the harassing assaults of bigotry, because their heterodoxy is judged not to be very great, rather than because God is deemed the sole judge and avenger of it? Those who forbear on the strength of such feeble and fluctuating motives as these, are not to be classed with the friends of religious liberty.

Whether mental error be innocent, or guilty, we need not, (perhaps in some cases) we cannot determine; it is enough for the present purpose, to show, that whatever be its guilt, it does not belong to man to punish it. It is probable that

sometimes we fall into error through perverseness and idleness, but often, very often, our misconceptions originate in very different causes. Truth is more valuable than the precious things of the earth, and an indolent neglect to seek it, we cannot but think culpable; but where is the man whom God has deputed the avenger even of this crime?*

* Lord Kames gives the following parable against persecution, for which he acknowledges his obligations to the ingenious Doctor Franklin.

And it came to pass after these things, that Abraham sat in the door of his tent, about the going down of the sun. And behold, a man bent with age, coming from the way of the wilderness, leaning on a staff. And Abraham arose and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy feet, and tarry all night; and thou shalt rise early in the morning, and go on thy way. And the man said, Nay; for I will abide under this tree. But Abraham pressed him greatly: so he turned and went into the tent: and Abraham baked unleavened bread, and they did eat. And when Abraham saw that the man blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the most high God, creator of heaven and earth? And the man answered, and said, I do not worship thy God, neither do I call upon his name; for I have made to myself a god, which abideth always in mine house, and provideth me with all things. And Abraham's zeal was kindled against the man, and he arose and fell upon the man, and drove him forth with blows, into the wilderness. And God called unto Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the stranger? And Abraham answered, and said, Lord he would not worship thee, neither would he call upon thy name; therefore have I driven him out from before my face into the wilderness. And God said, Have I borne with him these hundred and ninety and eight years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his

I scarcely need remind my readers that the nature of intolerance is not altered by the accidents of time, place and persons—that whoever may be the agents, or whoever the sufferers, and that whatever may be the mode or degree of torture or privation—under every latitude, and in every name and shape, intolerance is still substantially the same. To cut off a man's hand, because he does not worship God, or because he worships him in a way of his own, is as truly intolerance, as to cut off his head; and to withhold from him a benefit, as to inflict on him a punishment.

All systematic persecution, mild or fierce, proceed son the principle that it is right in some cases, for one man to interfere (*vi et armis*) with the religion of another. This exitious sentiment, has at this day, in one form or other, thousands of abettors in almost every nation of the old world, and probably among these, many who would be surprised to find themselves ranked among the friends of intolerance.

In this plea for the liberty of all religions, it is taken for granted that no religion is at variance with common honesty and civil government. If such anomalous religions should any where be found, let their devotees be arraigned for the crimes they commit from principles of devotion, with those who commit the same crimes from motives of mere villany.

rebellion against me; and couldst not thou, who art thyself a sinner, bear with him one night?—*Sketches of the History of Man, Vol. III. 435.*

It is possible that a religion may be at variance with common sense and with the word of God, and yet so far as civil society is concerned, be perfectly harmless. For instance, some may believe that the body and blood of Christ, are, in contradiction to their senses, *verily and indeed* taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, and yet be as temperate, upright and beneficent as their neighbours who believe that the bread and wine in that ordinance are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ. Again, some may be pleased to have other gods besides Jehovah, the living and true God, in opposition to the first precept of the decalogue; and some may go a step further, and have pictures and images of God, in defiance of the second, and yet be as good citizens as the most rigid Unitarians, or the most orthodox Calvinists. Probably some of my readers begin to think that this is carrying toleration too far, and that the writer is criminally indifferent to the honour of God; and yet, perhaps, there is not one of all these who is not in the daily habit of breaking the third commandment, by taking the sacred name in vain!

“ Religion is the cause of God, and it is at our peril that we neglect to support it.” And does it follow, that we are to support it by whatever means the devil, or his emissaries, may suggest? If we make a distinction between what is divine and what is human, we ought much more to distinguish between what is divine, and what is infernal. Do we serve God, that God who is

good to all, and whose tender mercy is over all his works—who, when he was importuned to reveal his glory, declared himself the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth; that God, all whose perfections are but different forms of love; by making him guilty of a religion, dark and lowering as a thunder storm, which blasts and desolates the earth as it advances? Can this be that religion which was ushered into the world with “glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good will towards men.” Granted, “genuine religion is the cause of God;” and this great truth, furnishes many arguments against every species of persecution.

“Is, then, every ridiculous vagary on which the human mind may light, to be tolerated in religion!” Why not? Considered in a political point of view, there is not a worse—in a religious point of view, not a more absurd vagary than intolerance: and the tendency of intolerance, to give consistence and perpetuity to the fleeting shades of mental weakness, may be received as a good *argumentum ad hominem*, by those who think it may be employed to promote truth and uniformity.

Is it not the height of folly to attempt the reduction of foibles and follies, by means adapted to increase their number, and add to their strength.*

* When Francis Suares, heard that his “Defence of the Catholic Faith against the Errors of England,” was publicly burnt in

Those who love their neighbours as well as themselves, will not be offended, that this volume contends for religious liberty, unrestricted and absolute, not as the exclusive privilege of any particular party, but as one of the paramount and inalienable rights of man.

The conclusion to which, it is humbly hoped, these pages will lead the enquirer, is that on no pretext, in any manner, or under any circumstances, is it politic or just, to use violence, penalties, or privations in aid of religion; but that, since miracles have ceased, religion, properly so called, can be advanced only by instruction, persuasion, and upright deportment—that it is a matter which rests between Man and his Maker, and not between one man and another—that discrepancy of religious sentiment is no necessary hindrance to

London, by order of James I. he is said to have exclaimed, “O that I might seal with my blood, those truths, which I have defended with my pen.” The writings of this Author consist of twenty-three volumes folio; and it is reported of him, whoever may deem it credible, that his memory had such a prodigious power of retention, that he could repeat the whole of them.—He died in Lisbon, 1617.

Savonarola was an able and zealous preacher among the Dominicans: he explained the Apocalypse, predicted a renovation of the Church, and inveighed with much severity against the clergy and the court of Rome. Alexander VI. excommunicated him; but he derided the anathemas of that sinful man. A Franciscan offered himself to the fire, to prove Savonarola a heretic: a Dominican offered himself to the same ordeal, to prove that Savonarola was *not* a heretic. What did these redoubtable disputants prove, except that their hearts were warm, and their reason weak?

social concord ;—and, that men of talents and integrity, ought *not* to be rendered ineligible to offices of the state, by the peculiarities of their church.

CHAPTER II.

History of Intolerance among ancient Nations.

WITH fabulous antiquity we have nothing to do. Among all authentic records, the honor of precedence is due to the books of Moses; and to pass by any fact connected with our subject, which they have preserved from oblivion, would appear at once a culpable and ill-omened omission.

Cain was the first who stained the earth with human blood, and to that unnatural, and, at that time, unprecedented crime, he was moved by religious jealousy. “Here,” says a learned writer,* “certainly originated the many-headed monster, *religious persecution*.” Ishmael, likewise, who was born after the flesh, persecuted Isaac who was born after the spirit; and from the epistle to the Galatians† it appears, that this action of the son of the bond-woman, was typical of the future spirit and conduct of the Jews towards the Christians.

It is notorious that the Jews in some periods of their history disgraced themselves by persecution, and that their doing so was by our Lord denounced at once a sign and a cause of their approach-

* Doctor Adam Clarke.

† c. 4. v. 29.

ing ruin. In the early memoirs of this nation, we meet with some facts and circumstances, which in some measure, account for, and palliate, this propensity. But let it be remembered, that in the day when the righteous judge avenged the blood which his chosen people in their intolerance had shed, it does not appear that he made any allowance for their mistakes, or for the circumstances, which occasioned them: the measure of their iniquity was full, and the greatness of their guilt was demonstrated in the awfulness of their punishment.

To understand the history of the election, we must take notice of the moral condition of the world, before, and at the time, the divine dispensation to that nation commenced. A knowledge of the state of the world, when the family of Abraham, was singled out from the families of the earth, and of the end of this separation, is the best key to the Pentateuch. So greatly did the wickedness of men increase, that before the flood the earth was corrupt and filled with violence. So general was the corruption of the antediluvians, that Noah and his family were the only exceptions to it. After the deluge, the heart of man, that ever-teeming fountain, again sent forth its polluted streams.

There have been various conjectures as to the object which the descendants of Noah proposed in building a city and tower in the plain of Shinar.

If the tower had been intended for a land-mark, or for an asylum in case of a second deluge, it is likely that the builders would have erected it on an eminence rather than a plain. Doctor Taylor thinks this building was a piece of state policy, and that its design was to command a view of the whole town and adjacent country, and to secure dominion to those who then had it. Mr. Hutchinson argues with much plausibility, that it was designed to serve the purpose of a temple to the host of heaven.* Whatever might be the design of the projectors and builders of Babel, it is certain, that in process of time, it became sacred to the service of superstition. The worship of the sun, moon and stars, was the most dignified species of ancient idolatry; the majesty and beauty of their appearance,—the silence and order of their revolutions, and their light, lustre and beneficial influences, commanded reverence and inspired gratitude.

There being no written revelation, oral traditions were soon mutilated, and lost; fancy dealt in fiction; and in the multiplicity, and variety of

* This gentleman supports his opinion in part by criticisms on the original text. The clause, "whose top to the heavens," he thinks refers not to the altitude, but to the use of the tower. And the confounding the language, lip, or confession, of the builders, was in his judgment destroying their pernicious uniformity in idolatrous worship. The seeds of schism being sown amongst them, they branched out into opposing parties, and left the work unfinished.

the creatures, the knowledge and worship of the creator, soon became extinct. It was probably imagined by those who first paid undue devotion to the heavenly orbs, that they were superior intelligences, the ministers of the invisible king. Of this guilty devotion, Job declares his innocence: "If I have beheld the sun when it shined; or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand."* Ur, the name of the place in which Abraham was born and brought up, signifies light and fire, and is supposed to have been famous for *ignicolism*, or the impure flames of Chaldean superstition.

The devil, having succeeded, in engaging in his service, the fairest and brightest part of the creation, employed his wiles with the more effect on meaner objects, until, by means of the creatures he had supplanted the creator, and rendered himself God of this world.

Maimonides, as quoted in Ainsworth, describes the progress of idolatry as follows:—"The sons of Adam erred with great error: they said—forasmuch as God hath created the stars and spheres to govern the world, and set them on high, and imparted honour to them, and they are ministers that minister before him; it is meet that men should laud and glorify and give them honour. When this thing was come into their heart, they

* Job xxxi. 26.

began to build temples unto stars, and to offer sacrifices to them, and to laud, and glorify them with words, and to worship before them, that they might, in their evil opinion, obtain favour of the creator. This was the root of idolatry. And in process of time, there stood up false prophets among the sons of Adam, who said that God had said unto them, Worship such a star, and build a temple for it, and make an image of it,* that all the people, women and children may worship it; and he shewed them the image which he had feigned out of his own heart, and said that it was the image of such a star, which was made known to him by prophecy: and they began to make images in temples, and under trees, and on tops of mountains and hills, and assembled together, and worshipped them. And this was spread through all the world. So the glorious and fearful name, was forgotten out of the mouth of all living, and out of their knowledge. And the wise men that were among them, as the priests, thought that there was no God except the the stars and spheres; but as for the rock everlasting, there was no man that acknowledged, or knew him, save a few persons; and in this way did the world walk, until Abraham our father was born.†”

* Amos v. 26. But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your God, which ye made to yourselves.

† Annotations on Genesis iv. 26.

The choice of Abraham and his posterity to a near and special relation to the God of heaven, was an act of sovereign wisdom and goodness, the benefits of which have come down to us. The calling of Abraham from his native country, and his alienation from his idolatrous kindred, were introductory to a system of moral and religious discipline, one great object of which, was the suppression of the accumulating errors and vices of polytheism. The covenant made with the patriarch, required of him prompt and implicit obedience to the divine commands, and stipulated to him and his family, many and great blessings, both temporal and spiritual, on condition of their walking in the ways of Jehovah. The subsequent events of Abraham's life, were well adapted to imprint on his mind indelible impressions of the presence and supremacy of God, and of the fitness of his creatures' being amenable to his government, and cheerfully dependant on his providence. The same remark applies to the life of Isaac and Jacob.

We hasten to a more important period in the history of this family, when at Sinai, the covenant made with their illustrious progenitor, was confirmed and amplified under the terrific demonstrations of the divine power and justice. In harmony with the promise that the seed of Abraham should be very numerous, we find them on their return from Egypt no less than six hundred thousand, notwithstanding the arm of violence had there been extended to oppress and diminish them.

The seed of Abraham by Sarah were now become a nation; and now was the time for them to receive those laws and ordinances which were to constitute their commonwealth, and distinguish them from all other people.

Many of the distinctions and injunctions of the Pentateuch will appear idle and ridiculous, unless considered in reference to the idle and ridiculous superstitions they were designed to combat.*

The grand and immediate object of these institutes, was, to render the seed of Abraham, a peculiar people; hence, their whole polity, civil and religious, was in direct opposition to the customs of their neighbours. Pagans exalted animals into divinities; the Israelites were ordered to esteem some of these unclean, and to offer others in sacrifice. It is observable, that in the successive plagues, which chastised the stubborn insolence of Pharaoh, such elements, animals, and reptiles, as the Egyptians worshipped, the Governor of the world employed as the instruments of his vengeance, and thereby confounded the gods of Egypt.

So stern and extensive was the dissenterism inculcated by the law of Moses, that the Israelites were bound to hold in abhorrence, whatever

* The solemn prohibition of seething a kid in his mother's milk, is an allusion to a savage and superstitious rite, observed by the heathen. *Exod. xxiii. 19.* Poole's Synopsis Criticorum, &c. in loco.

was deemed sacred, in the popular religions. So little courtesy was there in this divine innovation, that those objects, to which the Amorites offered their devotions, were deemed execrable, by the true descendant of Abraham. We have a melancholy proof of the propensity of the human mind, to error and superstition, in that, the family of Abraham, so often relapsed into the absurdities, which they had so solemnly abjured. In despite of voluntary engagements, of temporal calamities, and of the divine authority which met them at every turn, they revolted, and went after the idols of the heathen, until the pressure of affliction brought them to a sense of their folly. Ceremony was added to ceremony, line to line, precept to precept, and one living teacher sent after another to check this mania, and to preserve the chosen people from violating their covenant, or to reclaim them when they had done so: notwithstanding which, they continued to sin, and to repent, and sin again, until having repeatedly served strange gods in their own land, they were carried captive beyond Babylon, and compelled to serve strangers in a land which was not theirs.

But we are anticipating the order of events. The extermination of the Canaanites has often been a topic of dispute. It was not at the instigation of Mammon or of Mars, that the Israelites undertook this sanguinary enterprise, nor could any thing be imagined more incongenial with the

meekness and peaceful temper of Moses, than a war of aggression and conquest.

But having received a definitive commission, from the sovereign of nations and of worlds, he was no longer at liberty to consult his natural, or acquired dispositions.

In the name of the invisible and eternal Jehovah, he demanded of the king of Egypt, the emancipation of the Israelites.

To convince Pharaoh of his divine warrant, and to show the feebleness of the Egyptian divinities, the prophet was empowered to work a series of miracles, directly adapted to answer this twofold purpose.

The invasion of Canaan, and the excision of its inhabitants, by the sword of Israel, is to be classed with the same order of events, as the desolation of the old world by water, and the destruction of the devoted cities of the plain by fire. The scriptures represent the God of Israel, as the absolute proprietor and possessor of heaven and earth, and as clothed with authority over the nations, to dispose of them according to his sovereign will, and reward them for their righteousness, or punish them for their iniquity, when, and by what means he pleases. The seven nations of the Amorites, were so many clans of profligate idolaters; they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and therefore, the judge of the earth, and the avenger of wickedness, ordered the people he had chosen, to dispossess them

of their land, destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their sacred groves.*

The Israelites were strictly forbidden to enter into any alliance† with the idolaters against whom they were sent, as by so doing, they would be exposed to the infection of their superstition, and the pollutions consequent on it: on the contrary, they were required, utterly to subdue or destroy them, a requisition well calculated to inspire them with horror, at the crimes which called for such punishment.

We have entered into this detail on a difficult subject, as tending to disclose one source of that unsociable and intolerant spirit, which the Israelites so often manifested towards their neighbours. Any passion or disposition, whether good or bad, gains upon us by indulgence.

Our design requires, that we should notice a little further, the civil and religious constitutions of the Israelites. When formed into a body politic, their government was organized, with a special view to the object already specified, viz that of rendering them a peculiar people. Their law and polity were sacred; God was their king, and

* That these idolaters were guilty of the grossest immoralities, appears from Levit. xviii. 24. and by a bold and expressive prosopopœia, the land is represented in the following verse, as conscious of the indignity offered it by the beastly crimes of its inhabitants, and as vomiting them out.

† Exod. xxiii. 32, 33

Moses their minister. Hence, to worship any god but Jehovah, and acknowledge any prophet in opposition to Moses, was at once idolatry and treason ; the former, as ascribing divinity to that which was not God, and the latter as a breach of allegiance to their rightful sovereign. The unity and supremacy of God, were the centre of union to the sons of Jacob. Any infringement on these principles, so rational, and yet so little understood, was adapted to dissolve at once, the whole fabric of their religion and government.

In a short time after the deliverance of the Israelites from their servitude in Egypt, numbers of them revolted from their deliverer, and made an idol in imitation of Apis, in consequence of which the Levites, at the instance of Moses, slew three thousand of them.* This speedy revolt of the Israelites from their invisible sovereign, whose perfections and providence, they had so lately seen displayed in a train of stupendous miracles, shows how deeply their minds were infected with the idle fictions and idolatrous rites of the Egyptian mythology ; and the severity with which it was punished, shows that it was an offence of the highest magnitude. Korah, and his accomplices in rebellion, were ingulphed in the earth ; and the mutiny

* The Jews, in excuse of their ancestors, say that the golden ornaments were fashioned into the calf by some Egyptian god-makers, in the camp, who were the prompters of this act of sedition and idolatry.

which followed, was punished by a deadly disease which destroyed upwards of fourteen thousand.*

Balak, King of Moab, terrified at the near approach of Moses with such a formidable host of strangers, and thinking that there was a fatal spell in the curse of a prophet, sent for Balaam to curse Israel. The avaricious prophet, not being able to resist the rewards of divination, endeavoured by repeated sacrifices offered in several places, to obtain a commission to curse Israel, but did not succeed.

The daughters of Moab and Midian next employed their charms and their wiles against the sons of Jacob, who in despite of prohibitions and of impending death accepted the invitations of their fair decoyers, sat down to their feasts and bowed to their gods.† These compliances with the damsels of Moab and Midian ended in the destruction of twenty-four thousand Israelites who were cut off by the sword and the pestilence. The survivors having seen the divine vengeance in the untimely death of their brethren, were venting their grief at the door of the tabernacle, when Zimri,

* Num. xvi.

† Balaam, though a prophet, was a veteran in iniquity: it was by his advice that Balak employed this fascinating artifice, to seduce the sons of Israel. *Comp. Num. xxv. Rev. ii. 14. Num. xxxi. 16.* By Baal Peor, some understand the Sun as worshipped on Mount Peor, *Num. xxiii. 28.* others an obscene idol corresponding with the Priapus of the Romans.

one of the chiefs of the tribe of Simeon, brought a princess of Midian, whose name was Cozbi, into the camp, and took her to his tent.

They were followed by Phinehas, the son of the high priest, who slew them with a javelin, by which summary infliction of punishment, he stayed the plague, wrought righteousness, and obtained a confirmation in the priesthood.

When the two tribes and a half, whose territory lay on the farther side of Jordan, returned from the conquest of the promised land, they built an altar of large dimensions on the borders of the river, as a memorial of their relationship to the other tribes, and of the miracles to which they owed their success. The nine tribes and a half, supposing that this altar was designed for sacrifice, immediately assembled at Shiloh, to avenge with the sword, the schism of their brethren.* These and similar events may in some measure account for, if not excuse, the violence which often attended the efforts of religious zeal, among the seed of Abraham. Moreover, no civil government can be supported without force; and as in the Hebrew commonwealth, the church and state were one, there was of course, a mixture of the appropriate means of supporting each.

* *Jos.* xxii. 12. The way in which this misunderstanding was rectified shows that, the Israelites were not, even at this early period, the savages that some have taken them to be.

Causes of the Captivity in Babylon, and some Occurrences which transpired there.

After the death of Joshua, and of the elders, who were cotemporary with him, there rose up another generation, who had not seen the works which God did on behalf of Israel, and who knew him not; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, the gods of the people that were round about them: and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about.* When the apostate Israelites were by oppression rendered sensible of their sin and their folly in forsaking the God of their fathers; and when in their affliction, they cried unto him for help, he mercifully heard their cries, and raised them up judges to reform abuses, and to repulse their enemies. The office of judge was not hereditary in any particular family. It was an office very necessary and serviceable; for when there was no judge in Israel, the inferior magistrates became careless, the government became lax, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. It was not in the power of the judges to impose taxes, or otherwise innovate on the laws;

* Judges ii. 10, 16.

and they had no revenues but their own own property and the voluntary contributions of the people. This order of things, attended with many vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, continued from the death of Joshua to the days of Saul, a period of three hundred and thirty-nine years.

Samuel was ordained from his youth to be a prophet and judge, and the same was known from Dan even to Beersheba. When Samuel was old, he used his influence to have his sons appointed provincial judges;* and his sons, presuming on the connivance of their father, walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment.

Then all the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, and desired him to make them a king, who might judge them after the manner of other nations. From the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy it would appear, that it was not absolutely unlawful for the Israelites to have a king, as it is there specified what description of man they should elect, provided they were disposed to elect one, and how he should conduct himself. The petition of the elders, however, was not pleasing to Samuel; but when Samuel prayed, the Lord directed him to hearken to the voice of the people, adding, "for they have not rejected thee, but they have

* So I understand 1st Samuel, viii. 1. compared with Deuteronomy xvi. 18. Compare also Judges x. 4. and xii. 14. with v. 10.

rejected me, that I should not reign over them ;" from which it is evident that if the request itself was not wrong, there was something wrong in the motives or manner of it. The prophet was ordered solemnly to admonish his deluded people as to the disagreeable liberties which they might expect their king to take with them ;—that he would make their sons minister to his pride, and their daughters to his pleasure ;—that he would deprive them of their property, and enslave their persons ; and that, on the whole, they should rue the day on which they set over them a king. The people stoutly persisted in their demand of a king, and the prophet was finally directed to gratify their wishes. Saul, a young man of the tribe of Benjamin, comely in his person and modest in his manners, was accordingly elected. Saul, soon found occasion to signalize his courage in wars with the Ammonites and Philistines : he was afterwards sent to execute total destruction on the Amalekites, and was rejected from the kingdom, because he relaxed from the severity of the commission. David, the son of Jesse, was chosen to succeed Saul. The chief employment of this prince was war, in which he succeeded so far as to subdue and render tributary most of his neighbours.

Under the peaceful reign of Solomon, this new monarchy attained the zenith of its glory. This prince adorned the early part of his life by his wisdom and piety, but tarnished the latter by his

folly and wickedness. In early life he built and dedicated a temple to Jehovah ; and when by the multitude of years, he ought to have been confirmed in the good habits of his youth, he raised altars to idols. To this fatal incongruity he was beguiled by his wives and concubines, whom in his wanton dotage, he multiplied to the number of a thousand.

The reign of Solomon was in several respects magnificent, but it was withal oppressive ; and magnificence founded on oppression, cannot be of long continuance. The blossom is as dust, because the root is rottenness. On the accession of Rehoboam, the congregation of Israel desired him to make light the heavy yoke which his father had put on them. The Israelites were now to experience the sweets of royalty : the young king by the advice of evil counsellors, told his subjects that his little finger should be thicker than his father's loins ;—that his father made their yoke heavy, but he would add to it ; and that his father chastised them with whips, but he would chastise them with scorpions. The result was a rupture in the kingdom, which was never healed : the people answered the king, What portion have we in David ? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse ; to your tents O Israel ! The ten tribes took Jeroboam the son of Nebat, a popular and spirited young man, and made him their king. The king of Israel, thinking that if his subjects went up three times a

year to sacrifice to the Lord in Jerusalem, according to the law of Moses, they would probably be reconciled to Rehoboam, and that his kingdom and life would be thereby greatly endangered, made two golden calves, and set them up, the one at Dan and the other at Bethel, the two extremities of his dominions, and said, Behold thy gods O Israel! and for this impious policy he is branded with indelible shame, as the man who made Israel to sin.

The ten tribes continued to violate that covenant which was the charter of their mercies, and to defile their land, in defiance of the warnings and expostulations of prophets, with the abominations of superstition and idolatry, until the king of Assyria carried them captive, and put a period to the kingdom of Israel. Thus the Israelites lost their country, their national independence, and personal liberty, by forsaking their almighty protector, and polluting themselves with the idols of the heathen. The men of Judah, ought to have been deterred from imitating the manners of their brethren by witnessing the awful fulfilment of prophetic denunciations in their sad catastrophe. So far, however, were they from being instructed and reclaimed by seeing the successive disasters which befel their kindred, that with few exceptions they continued to pursue with avidity lying vanities, as though anxious to put a period to their own mercies.

The kings of Judah like those of Israel, were

often foremost in acts of folly and transgression. That their progress might not be impeded in the path of sin, they removed obstructions, by persecuting and killing those who had sufficient fidelity and decision to oppose them.

Manasseh, the wicked son of the good king Hezekiah, distinguished himself above all his predecessors, in this odious work, insomuch that he filled Jerusalem with idols and innocent blood.

This king was taken to Babylon and immured in a dungeon, where by affliction he was brought to repent of his folly : on being restored to his kingdom he applied himself with vigour to remedy the evils of his former impious tyranny. The kingdom of Judah enjoyed thirty-three years of prosperity under this reformed monarch. His son Ammon, by whom he was succeeded, was only twenty-two years of age when he came to the throne, and of course had seen only the best part of his father's conduct, yet he imitated the worst. Such was the progress of depravity under this profligate prince, that the sanctuary of the Lord was polluted with an obscene idol, and the most disgusting impurities were practised in its court. The servants of Ammon put him to death, and his son Josiah, though a child, was made king. In the sixteenth year of his age, Josiah took upon himself the administration of public affairs, and began with diligence and intrepidity, to explode and abolish the idolatrous innovations of his father.

The succeeding kings of Judah, with the priests and the people, accelerated by their perverse and preposterous conduct, the march of desolation and vassalage to their devoted country: they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword, in the house of their sanctuary; and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that escaped from the sword, carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and to his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.*

From the book of Daniel, it appears, that in the vast empire of Chaldea and Babylon, the arbitrary will of the sovereign, was law equally in religion and government; whom he would he killed, and whom he would he kept alive,

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16—20.

Nebuchadnezzar gave a singular exhibition of wanton and intolerant caprice, when he made an image of gold, of prodigious stature, and setting it up in the plain of Dura, dedicated it (probably to Bel or Belus,) with great pomp, and commanded the assembled nations to fall down and worship it. Effeminacy and oppression often go together; a concert of music struck up, as the signal for the degrading homage.

When the haughty tyrant was informed that there were certain Jews who refused to serve his gods, and to worship the image which he had set up, he could scarcely credit the report, and his rage was equal to his surprise. The persons accused on this occasion, were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whom at the request of Daniel, the king had set over the province of Babylon.*

On a direct and positive refusal to comply with his proclamation, the king was filled with fury, and the form of his visage was changed against the obstinate recusants, and he commanded the most mighty men of his army to bind them, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual. So intense was the heat, that it slew the men who executed the

* It is probable that no one dared to bring an accusation against Daniel, on account of his being so much in favour, and so high in authority; and that the other Jews were in too humble circumstances, to be the objects of envy and jealousy.

royal mandate. But lo, an angelic messenger, of divine aspect, is sent to disarm the flames of their destroying power, as to the servants of the Most High; and to confound by the splendor of their triumph, the idolatry and intolerance of their persecutors.

Ignorance abandons one error to take up another, or pursues an old one under a new name. The king's ire, was by the miracle in favour of the rebels, changed into good will and admiration; but his mind was still in darkness, he was still the ignoramus and the despot; for he next made a decree, that every people, nation and language, which spoke any thing amiss against the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be cut in pieces, and their houses be made a dung-hill.

In the reign of Belshazzar, the riches and splendour of Babylon fell to the possession of the Medes and Persians.

The captivity of the Jews was of seventy years continuance, and the time of their liberation now drew nigh. The combined forces of Media and Persia, directed by the skill and bravery of Cyrus, took Babylon, after a siege of two years, and slew its voluptuous king, in the midst of his profaneness, and revelry. The book of Daniel ascribes the conquest to Darius, the Median, probably because he began the war, because Cyrus acted in his name, and because he was entitled to respect from his age, being then sixty-two

years old. If any military adventurer ever merited the applause of mankind, Cyrus was the man. This renowned general, however, though he spent twenty-one years in the toils of conquest, was content with subordination, until by the death of Darius, he came to the full possession of universal sovereignty.

Under Darius, the prophet Daniel occupied a station of equal eminence with that which he had held under the kings of Babylon. It is charitable to hope that this monarch was in his dotage, for he was prevailed on by his envious princes, counsellors and captains, to establish a royal statute, immutable according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, That whoever should ask a petition of any god or man, except the king, for the space of thirty days, should be cast into the den of lions. The king was so regaled by the incense offered to his vanity, that his feeble intellect could not anticipate any mischievous consequence as likely to result from his rash and foolish decree. The place-men to whom the integrity of Daniel was offensive, despaired of finding any occasion against him as touching the affairs of the kingdom, and therefore they sought it in the law of his God. The conspirators succeeded: having found Daniel offering up supplications and thanksgivings to the God of Heaven, as was customary with him, they informed the king of his delinquency, and demanded his execution. Then the king saw at once his own folly and the insi-

dious malice of his nobles ; he awoke from the reveries of a sickly ambition, and gave way to remorse, but it was too late ; the edict was passed and could not be recalled. The wisest and most upright minister of the empire, was consigned to the mercy of the lions, and the king retired to spend the night in fasting and sadness, still hoping that the God of Daniel would deliver him. Early in the morning, the anxious and sorrowful monarch repaired to the den, and realized his hopes in the preservation of his faithful and innocent servant, rejoiced that the vigilance of providence had frustrated the stratagems of his adulators, and sentenced them to the destruction which they had designed for Daniel.

These stupid and barbarous proceedings, though not to be ranked with the systematic intolerance of later ages, yet show, that it is the wisdom of kings, to attend exclusively to the secular interests of their subjects, and not by their decrees and statutes to tamper with their religion ; that

Strictly punishing men's faults,
They let their consciences and thoughts,
Rest absolutely free.*

With the exception of these irregular sallies of hostility, which resulted chiefly from the manœuvres of envious ambition in subjects, and intoxicating despotism in rulers, the Jews were allowed in the land of their captivity, the undisturbed

* Walsh's Ode to King William.

enjoyment of their religion: though strangers in Babylon, and often ungracious and austere in their deportment to idolaters, they were allowed to fill the first offices of state, without abjuring the faith of their ancestors, or conforming to the mystic rites of Bel and Nebo.

The Ancient Persians.

Cyrus had no sooner established the Persian monarchy on the ruins of the Chaldean, than he permitted as many Jews as pleased, to return and rebuild their dilapidated city and temple. Then the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, as the streams in the south. The mild and generous spirit of the Persian hero, appears to much advantage in his tolerant and benign treatment of the Jews; for he not only gave them liberty to return to their own country, but also afforded them many facilities and inducements. He likewise gave up the gold and silver vessels which had been taken from Jerusalem, amounting to five thousand four hundred.

The captives who availed themselves of the indulgent proclamation of Cyrus, were in number about fifty thousand. Very many had acquired property, formed connections, or obtained lucrative and important offices, which induced them to remain. The Persian empire was parcelled

out into provinces, which were governed by lieutenants, over whom were placed three presidents, the chief of which in the reign of Cyrus, was Daniel. The Jews who returned, met with some opposition from their Samaritan neighbours. The Samaritans wished to unite with the Jews in restoring the temple, as they acknowledged the true God; but they were rejected, and therefore from motives of jealousy and resentment, did all they could to obstruct the progress of the work.

Cyrus extended the Persian empire from the Arabian to the Euxine and Caspian Seas, and from the Mediterranean in the west, to the Indus in the east. Having enjoyed but a short time the ease and magnificence obtained by his prowess and wisdom, he died, leaving a character far more amiable and splendid, than any of his predecessors in war and government. Cambyes inherited the throne of his father, but he was not so happy as to possess his princely endowments and virtues. The Samaritans continued to harass their neighbours by threats and sarcasms, and especially by sending injurious representations to the prince. Cambyes did not revoke the edict of his father, for the restoration of the temple; but he secretly encouraged the Samaritans in their officious interference. Cambyes was succeeded in the throne by the usurper Smerdis, who being one of the Magi, was probably a persecutor.* It is certain

* It is not strange that an usurper should follow a tyrant. Cambyes disgraced himself and his government, by many acts of

that he complied with the malicious importunities of the Samaritans, and obstructed the restoration of the city and temple.

This impostor, who had passed himself for Smerdis, the murdered son of Cyrus, was assassinated after a reign of eight months, and Darius Hystaspes was raised to the throne. Under this prince, the re-building of the temple went on successfully, and in the sixth year of his reign it was completed, and the Jewish state restored according to the original decree of Cyrus.

In forming an estimate of the liberality of the Persians, manifested in the release of so many exiles from captivity, and in the grant of facilities and encouragements to restore the temple at Jerusalem, we ought to recollect that the Persian mythology was abhorrent from the use of temples, except as the repositories of the sacred fire. Hence, at the instigation of the Magi, Xerxes set fire to the splendid faues of Greece. The Persians had two divinities, Ormuzd and Ahraman, each supreme in his own department, the one

caprice and cruelty. He rashly entered on an expedition against Ethiopia, in which he squandered with equal prodigality the money and lives of his subjects. From Thebes in Upper Egypt, he sent fifty thousand men to burn the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and to destroy his worshippers; but they were overwhelmed in the burning sands of the desert. At Memphis, he inflicted a mortal wound on the sacred bull Osiris, the chief god of the Egyptians. Cambyses had a sister, distinguished by her beauty, and a brother by his strength, both of whom he killed.

good and the other evil: of the former, light was the symbol; of the latter, darkness.

Before the time of Zoroaster, the Persians erected their altars on the tops of hills, where their fire, the element and emblem of Ormuzd, was continually liable to be extinguished by rains and tempests.

The learned reformer of Magianism ordered temples to be erected over these altars, and pretended, that, being caught up into heaven, the divinity addressed him out of a brilliant flame of fire, some of which he brought and deposited on the altar of his first temple, where it was preserved with the utmost care, and whence it was propagated through the empire. According to the lofty speculations of the Persian impostor, the sun being the most perfect and resplendent fire, God has fixed in it the throne of his glory: and therefore men in their worship, should direct their eyes and hearts to that august luminary, as to the presence chamber of the invisible and eternal king.

The sacred fire being of the same nature with that of the sun, was reputed the Shechinah of the divinity, and therefore fit to kindle devotion, when the orb of day was invisible: to neglect or pollute the sacred fire, was a crime of the greatest turpitude and guilt.*

* The sacred fires were watched night and day; and if by any accident, any one of them happened to be extinguished, it was rekin-

The history of Zoroaster, is involved in much uncertainty. According to the learned and cautious Prideaux, he flourished in the reign of Darius Hystaspes. He was of humble birth, but by shrewd and successful imposition, rose to such power and magnificence, as to be taken for a king. His zeal for Magianism continued to the eve of life, when he drew upon himself and his followers, the indignation of Argasp, king of the oriental Scythians, by an indiscreet attempt to convert him. It would seem that the Persian impostor, in this effort to extend his religion, used language of intimidation, at which the Sabian was so indignant, that he invaded Bactria with an army, slew Zoroaster with his subordinate priests, and demolished the fire temples of the province. Darius, however, no sooner heard of this outrage than he marched against the invader of his dominions, and avenged at once the death of the prophet, and the insult and injury offered to the established religion.*

In the reign of a Persian prince, who in the dled, either by the solar rays, or by fire brought from some other temple. The burning bush at Horeb, the fire and smoke of Sinai, and the flame which came from heaven, and was preserved on the altar of burnt offerings in the tabernacle and temple, were, probably the archetypes of Zoroaster's institutes respecting fire. Plato was not the only, nor the first philosopher who drew from the sacred fountains.

* Connexion of the Old and New Testament, Part I. Book iv. 178.

book of Esther is called Ahasuerus, (Darius Hystaspes, according to Usher; according to Scaliger, Xerxes; and according to Prideaux, who supports his opinion with many arguments, Artaxerxes Longimanus,) Haman, a wealthy and conceited courtier, plotted the total excision of all the Jews in the empire. Haman had no higher motive to undertake this deadly enterprise, than the desire of revenging a petty affront offered to his pride.

The servants of the king were ordered to reverence Haman, and bow down before him; but Mordecai, the Jew, who was one of the porters of the royal palace, declined paying this homage. The king's favourite so keenly resented this trifling breach of decorum, that he meditated the destruction, not only of the offender, but of his whole nation; and therefore informed the king, that "there was a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of his kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them."

These allegations respecting the singularities of the Jews, must, if true, relate to their religious observances; for there can be no doubt of their being obedient to the civil laws. And if not, the violated laws would specify the punishment of the transgressors, so that there could be no occasion for the king's special interposition. It would

seem, therefore, that uniformity in religion, was the ostensible idol, at whose shrine the Jewish nation were to be immolated.

But providence blasted the execrable designs of the conspirator, and turned them to the ruin of him and his family; and with them of seventy-five thousand eight hundred of the Jews' enemies. What an insulting farce on government was a political constitution, which authorized the sovereign, in any fit of madness or misanthropy, to issue a decree, commissioning one part of his subjects to massacre another; and how well adapted to immortalize regal folly, and extend the fatal effects of precipitate anger, was the law which made every such decree irrevocable.

One main object of the laws of Persia seems to have been the aggrandizement of the king: he was treated as more than mortal; all besides, as beasts, kept for conveniency. It is true the fearful prerogatives of royalty, so fatal when possessed by weak and despotic princes, were innocent in the hands of Cyrus: his sense of justice, his magnanimity and moderation restrained him from abusing them; but that renowned prince showed his want of foresight, when he bequeathed such a perilous legacy to his sons. The camp and palace of Cyrus were open to all; he was just, temperate and courteous; and he was beloved and revered even by them he had conquered. But if he designed that the empire should be permanent, and that the fruits of his labours should remain with

his descendants, he calculated very erroneously. The government contained the seeds of its own ruin; it fostered pride and effeminacy in the sovereign, with servility and dissimulation in the subject; it contained no correctives for these evils but such as were ruinous, and therefore hastened to decay.

How little must that prince have known of men or things, of the nature of justice or the obligations of humanity, when at the instigation of an incendiary, he issued the bloody mandate for the extermination of the Jews, and how deficient in resources must the royal delinquent have been, when he could not obviate the sad consequences of such a rash and guilty measure, but by instituting a civil war!

The Ancient Greeks.

The nations of the earth soon became weary of the idle pomp and oppressive power of the Persian kings, and made many ineffectual attempts to emancipate themselves. At length the rising democracies of Greece assailed the eastern despotism with alarming violence. The vicissitudes which these independent states had experienced were many and various, arising from the clashing interests of people struggling for liberty, and tyrants striving for dominion.

Though in the spirited republics of Greece, the

subjects of litigation were numerous and discordant, and though thirty thousand gods were worshipped, and their worship engrossed no inconsiderable portion of the public attention, yet we find in Grecian history but few vestiges of religious feuds. Where there were so many divinities to be adored, an atheist must have appeared a monster of impiety, yet Democritus, the father of atheism, and the first who innovated on the current mythology and religion, by teaching the doctrine of atoms, was held in great admiration, was presented with five hundred talents by the magistrates of Abdera, and was honoured with public statues, even during his life-time. It is probable, however, that Democritus was treated more respectfully than he would otherwise have been, owing to his noble birth, high reputation, and powerful connexions; for Protagoras an eminent disciple of his, who was not favoured with these advantages, was banished, and his books burnt with circumstances of public hatred and execration, because he had in them expressed a doubt respecting the divinity of the gods. Diagoras, surnamed the *Atheist*, was treated with still greater severity. His history is briefly as follows:—he took pleasure in making verses, and composed a poem, which a brother poet stole from him, and by it procured fame. Diagoras prosecuted the thief, who swore that the poem was his own, and the plaintiff was unable to prove the contrary. This affliction overcame the faith of the philoso-

pher, and induced him to deny a providence. His doubts were no sooner divulged, than he was summoned by the Athenian magistrates to give an account of his doctrine. Apprehending that compliance with this summons would expose him to still greater calamities, the injured poet refused to appear, in consequence of which, a price was set on his head. To escape death, Diagoras took shipping; but misfortune still pursued him, and he was cast away.

Socrates, the first who brought philosophy from heaven to dwell amongst men, became a victim to persecution. This dishonourable persecution, which deprived Greece of one of her brightest ornaments, probably originated in envy of his fame, and hatred of his principles and integrity.

The accusation of Socrates, presented on oath to the king* of Athens, was expressed in the following terms:—

“Melitus, son of Melitus, of the people of
“Pythos, accuseth Socrates, son of Sophroniscus,
“of the people of Alopecæ.

“Socrates is criminal, because he acknowledges
“not the gods that the republic acknowledges,
“and because he introduces new divinities. He
“is farther criminal, because he corrupts the
“youth.

“Be his punishment, Death.”

* A magistrate so called, in memory of the city's having been formerly governed by kings.

It is said, that Socrates in his private conversations, often spoke in elevated terms of the existence of one God, eternal and invisible, the creator of the universe, the supreme director and arbiter of all events, the avenger of crimes and rewarder of virtues; but that he did not dare to give a public avowal of these great and lofty sentiments. If Socrates was sensible of the vanity of idols, and the absurdity of worshipping them, his greatest admirers cannot exonerate him from the charge of duplicity. The probability is, that as a philosopher, he derided the group of grotesque figures and phantasms which were revered as deities, but as a citizen of Athens, he joined in their adoration.

Supposing this representation to be correct, we are at a loss to say what motive could have induced Socrates to dissemble his sentiments on so noble a truth as that of the unity of God, except the fear of having his fame obliterated, for apostacy from the established religion. His dissimulation could not arise from the fear of death, for to that, he showed a noble superiority. The charge of introducing new divinities, has reference to the genius or dæmon of Socrates, to whose beneficent vigilance, our philosopher attributed his preservation and success.

This attendant dæmon was a modest personification of that piercing sagacity, which Socrates had acquired by the close and retentive study of men and things. Socrates avoided with much

care, the affectation of superior wisdom. When the oracle at Delphos pronounced him the wisest of mortals, he attributed the flattering distinction to his having discovered that he knew nothing.

Alcibiades, an Athenian youth whom Socrates could never cure of rashness, pride, and precipitation, insulted the state religion by defacing the public statues of Mercury, and performing a mock representation of the Elusinian mysteries, and thereby occasioned his master's being accused as a corruptor of youth. Admitting that these were merely the ostensible reasons of proceeding against Socrates, and that his prosecution really originated in private malice, still if the religion of Athens had been left as every religion ought to be, to stand by its truth, or fall by its falsehood, it would not have been made a pretext for destroying one of the greatest sages of antiquity.

The orator Lysias prepared an elaborate defence of Socrates, containing pathetic appeals to his judges, but the philosopher rejected it. Plato stood up to defend his master, but while apologizing for his youth, he was abruptly ordered by the court to sit down. Socrates therefore pleaded his own cause with his usual composure and firmness, and disdaining to ask for mercy, called upon his judges for that justice, which by their office and their oath, they were bound to administer. The end of the tragedy is, that the prince of philosophers was found guilty, and sentenced to die by the poison of hemlock. He

received his sentence and met with his fate, with that calm intrepidity which added new dignity to his character. The execution of Socrates was deferred for thirty days, which he spent without any expression of impatience, in the gloom of the common prison.

In this solemn interval, a faint ray of immortality shone into his mind; he spoke of going to the society of the blest, and requested that his friends would not weep over his corpse as though it were Socrates. When the fatal hour arrived, he drank the deadly potion, and resigned himself to its effects, without the least agitation. Plato and Xenophon, two distinguished disciples of Socrates, happily recorded the most memorable instances of his wisdom and virtue; and thereby entailed a rich inheritance on his ungrateful country.

The desperate struggles for liberty, which signalized, and will for ever signalize the plain of Marathon, and the straits of Thermopylæ, taught the kings of Persia the expediency of turning the arms of Athens and Sparta against each other. The gold of Persia was too successful in disseminating strife and exciting warfare among the Greeks.

But the destinies of the Persian empire were swiftly running out, and the world was hastening to a third general revolution. A new despotism now rose on the shores of the Ægean sea, which soon blended the rival commonwealths of Achaia into one absolute monarchy, and carried its arms and its conquests to the most distant nations.

Macedon, prior to the time of Philip, was a petty and insignificant dominion, and was refused admittance into the allied states of Greece. The artful policy of Philip, by fanning the flames of discord, reduced the powers he wished to destroy. Some efforts were made to sap the rising empire of the insidious tyrant, but they were in vain.

Demosthenes exerted his impetuous eloquence to rouse his countrymen to a sense of their danger, and to combine their counsels and their forces against a power which threatened them with slavery. But the hypocritical finesse of Philip, seconded by the gold of Macedon, nonplused all opposition: circumvention, bribery, and terror, brought him daily accessions of dominion. By insinuating and perfidious policy, accompanied with ample largesses, he created himself friends in the midst of his enemies; he valued war and peace, and made treaties and broke them, just as each might contribute to elevate him to the sovereignty of Greece; and he eventually succeeded, rather as a merchant than as a general.

The subjection of Greece, though a primary object with the king of Macedon, was far from being the goal of his ambition, and therefore immediately after the battle of Cheronea, he caused himself to be elected generalissimo of the combined forces of Macedon and Greece against Persia. But before the preparations necessary for this expedition were completed, he was

assassinated by one of his life-guards, while displaying his magnificence in a public procession.

Alexander, deservedly called the *Great*, if the performance of great exploits, and the commission of great crimes, can entitle a man to that epithet, inherited the genius and prowess of his father. On the day of his birth, the temple of Diana, at Ephesus was burnt, the goddess being absent, it is said, in attendance on the young hero. When Alexander was about fourteen years of age, Philip wrote to Aristotle, who was a native of Stagyra, in Macedon, requesting him to become preceptor to the young prince, and congratulating himself not so much that he had such a son, as that he had an opportunity of procuring him such an instructor.

Aristotle acceded to the invitation, and spent eight years in initiating his royal pupil in the important accomplishments of natural philosophy, ethics, politics, and rhetoric. The diligence and progress of the scholar were equal to the ability and attention of the teacher; and Philip was so delighted with the attainments of his son, that he erected statues in honour of Aristotle, and for his sake, rebuilt and beautified Stagyra. Having mentioned the name of Aristotle, I shall here transcribe a passage from the history of that consummate critic and philosopher.

“The last fourteen years of his life he spent mostly at Athens, surrounded with every assist-

ance which men and books could afford him, for prosecuting his philosophical enquiries.

The glory of Alexander's name, which then filled the world, insured tranquillity and respect to the man whom he distinguished as his friend: but after the premature death of that illustrious protector, the invidious jealousy of priests and sophists, inflamed the malignant and superstitious fury of the Athenian populace: and the same odious passions which proved fatal to the offensive virtue of Socrates, fiercely assailed the fame and merit of Aristotle. To avoid the cruelty of persecution, he secretly withdrew himself to Chalcis, in Eubœa. This measure was sufficiently justified by a prudent regard to his personal safety; but lest his conduct should appear unmanly when contrasted with the firmness of Socrates in a similar situation, he condescended to apologize for his flight, by saying that he was unwilling to afford the Athenians a second opportunity to sin against philosophy. He seems to have survived his retreat from Athens only a few months; vexation and regret probably ended his days."

Thus died the great disciple of Plato, the great teacher of Alexander, a man who united the greatest mental resources with the most determined and indefatigable assiduity, and by their junction, obtained a far more extensive, permanent, and glorious empire over the minds of men, than his royal pupil did over their bodies.

In one of the visions of Daniel, the Grecian

conqueror is represented as a panther, with two pair of wings; in another as a he-goat coming from the west on the face of the whole earth, with such swiftness as not to touch the ground.* These similes are well supported by the velocity of Alexander in his career of conquest. Most of the nations who had bowed their necks to Philip, rejoiced at the tidings of his death, and threw off the yoke which he had imposed on them; but their joy was short, and their liberty but for a moment.

Though but twenty years of age, Alexander instantly caused the barbarians to the north of the Danube to submit; Thebes had scarcely declared against him when it was laid in ruins; he next passed over into Asia, surprised and defeated the Persians on the banks of the Granicus; came up with Darius, and repulsed his almost countless forces near the city of Issus in Cilicia, and completed the subjugation of this great empire in the plains of Arbela.

It was in the course of this campaign that Alexander, irritated by the Tyrians refusing to throw open their gates to him, laid siege to Tyre where he met with obstinate resistance. As Tyre was situated on an island, and derived its riches from trade, it was dependant on the adjacent country for provisions. As Alexander had not a fleet at his command, he was obliged to fill

* Dan. vii. 6—8. 5.

up the strait which intervened between the continent and Tyre, before he could storm it. In this formidable undertaking of turning an island into a peninsula, he spent about seven months, and while thus engaged, sent his commissaries to Judea to summon the inhabitants to submit, and to furnish things necessary for the subsistence of the army. The Jews refused, and pleaded in justification of their conduct, their oath of allegiance to Darius, which so exasperated Alexander that he vowed their total destruction.

As soon as he had effected the reduction of Tyre, he marched directly against Jerusalem, with the design of fulfilling his vow. At this time Jaddua was high-priest, who hearing of Alexander's approach, dressed himself in his pontifical robes, and went out to meet him, attended by the Levites, who were dressed in white garments. It is said, that the Jews with their city and temple, owed their preservation to the conqueror's realizing in this procession, the accomplishment of a dream which he had at Dia in Macedon, in which this same Jaddua, arrayed in the same magnificent attire, appeared to him, and exhorted him to banish fear, and to cross the Hellespont, and assured him that God would march at the head of his army, and give him the victory over the Persians. Alexander himself assigned this reason for laying aside his resentment, to his favourite general Parmenio, and added, that the instant he saw this priest, he knew him by his habit,

stature and mien, to be the same as appeared to him at Dia.

Instead, therefore, of demolishing the temple, and exterminating the Jews, Alexander offered sacrifice in the former, and assembling the latter, bid them ask any favour they pleased. The Jews requested nothing more than the undisturbed enjoyment of their religion both at home and abroad, and exemption from the payment of the usual tribute every seventh year. In addition to the courteous concession of these favours, Alexander assured the Jews, that if any of them entered his army, they should even there, enjoy the free exercise of their religion.

Happily for the memory of Alexander, he did not add to the outrages of the conqueror those of the persecutor, unless his killing Clitus and Callisthenes, for opposing his deification, be considered in this light.* We see in this singular man the weakness of our nature, in that when he had subdued the arms of Persia, he became himself the victim of its luxury. The foolish pride of eastern princes required divine honours, and the son of Philip affected to be the son of Jupiter. The poems of Homer were the gospel of Alexander, and by an absurd and wicked imitation of the hero of the Iliad, he committed cruelties, which in spite of many great and generous

* Had Alexander been as strongly impelled to acts of violence by religious zeal, as he was by military enthusiasm, he would have left a fine example for the booted apostles of later times.

actions, fix eternal reproach on his name. On his return from his Indian expedition, which he was prompted to undertake by the fables of Bacchus and Hercules, our hero died at Babylon in the thirty-third year of his age, of a fever, occasioned by intemperance, and his extensive empire was divided, or rather torn to pieces by his chief commanders.

It ought not to be omitted, that when Alexander, panting for posthumous fame, projected the erection of Alexandria in Egypt, he enticed the Jews to become settlers in his new city, by the powerful attractions of ample privileges and immunities. By this splendid enterprise, worthy of a great prince, the beauties of Grecian architecture were displayed on the confines of Lybia, and a new emporium rose under the fostering influence of a liberal policy, to command the commerce of the world.

*The Condition of the Jews under Alexander's
Successors.*

Judea, with Syria and Phenicia, became subject to Laomedon, under whom the Jews enjoyed protection and repose.

Ptolemy Lagus had rendered himself powerful in Egypt; but as his dominions were not equal to his ambition, he invaded Judea, and entered Jerusalem, unresisted, on the sabbath day. The

king of Egypt acted with some severity towards the Jews at first, and took great numbers of them captive into Egypt; he relaxed his severity towards them, however, on better acquaintance; and rewarded the diligence and fidelity of numbers, by placing them in offices of trust and emolument.*

When Ptolemy was compelled to resign Judea to Antigonus, who came against him with an overwhelming force, he successfully allured the Jews, by acts of kindness, to leave their own land, in order to settle in Egypt. Antigonus disgusted and irritated the Jews by perfidy and oppression: he was killed at the battle of Ipsus, and Judea, which he had taken from Ptolemy, reverted to its former possessor. By the death of Antigonus, the successors of Alexander were reduced to four, and on this occasion, a new division of the empire took place. Seleucus, to whom was allotted the east, built a number of cities in Asia Minor, which he peopled chiefly with colonies of Jews, whom he treated with much clemency and kindness.

Ptolemy Lagus was succeeded in the throne of Egypt by his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus.†

* According to Prideaux, one hundred thousand were taken captive, and thirty thousand were distinguished by marks of special confidence.

† *Affectionate to Brothers*; so surnamed ironically, because he put two of his brothers to death.

According to Josephus, that translation of the Hebrew scriptures into the Greek language, called the *Septuagint*, was executed in the reign of this prince. Application was made to the Jews for a correct copy of their history, laws, and institutes, and for men competent to translate them into Greek; and this application was accompanied with magnificent presents to the temple of Jerusalem, and with the restoration of liberty to all Jews throughout the dominions of Ptolemy, who had at various times been taken captive and sold as slaves, and the price of their redemption was paid by the king.

The chronology of this transaction is attended with considerable difficulty. The formation of the royal library at Alexandria, was suggested by Demetrius Phalerius, a noble Athenian, who flourished in the court of Ptolemy Lagus. This illustrious statesman governed Athens for the space of ten years, with so much wisdom and virtue, that thirty-six statues were erected in his honour. This popularity however, was not of long continuance; for some enemies of Phalerius, propagated their slanders with such effect at Athens, that his statues were destroyed; on which he observed, that though the Athenians effaced his statues, they could not efface the virtue which caused them to be erected.

The fickle Athenians sentenced the man they so lately idolized, to die; which sentence he eluded, by making his escape to Egypt, where

he was received and protected with a deference and cordiality answerable to his rank and character. Phalerius was anxious to compensate the kindness of his royal host by contributing to the usefulness and splendour of his reign : he therefore advised him to collect and read books relating to civil policy and government, because in them he would meet with much wholesome counsel, which none of his friends would venture to give him.

Ptolemy came at once to the resolution of forming a library and museum, and availed himself of the able assistance of his polished guest, to accomplish his undertaking. According to the Jewish historian, it was at the instance of Demetrius Phalerius that the king of Egypt sent a deputation to Palestine, to procure Hebrew manuscripts, that with them he might enrich his library.*

The Jews were now favoured with a bright and cheering gleam of prosperity, throughout the extensive dominions of the Lagidæ and Seleucidæ. The observance of their law, exposed them to no galling proscription ; and the honours and emolu-

* Some modern critics contend, that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, was made for the accommodation of the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria, and that the history of it, as given by the Jews, is in many particulars improbable, and in some, palpably erroneous. The arguments *pro* and *con*, may be seen in Prideaux's *Connexion*, Part II. Book i. and in the *Ency. Brit.* Article *Septuagint*.

ments which stimulate industry, were as accessible to them, as to the gentiles.

People sometimes lose their worth, as they improve their circumstances: this was the case with the Jews; they had address to avail themselves of the advantages afforded them by the justice and policy of their rulers; but they had not virtue enough to guard them against the fatal operation of affluence and splendour. Many of the Jews, in despite of the solemn obligations of their religion, became shamefully addicted to the manners of the Greeks; a gymnasium was erected within the suburbs of Jerusalem, and Jason, an unprincipled priest, who had obtained the pontificate by money, encouraged the people to apostatize.

By venality, dissoluteness, and irreligion, the renegade Jews endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with Antiochus, king of Syria. This man was every way fit to scourge them, which he accordingly did with a vengeance, notwithstanding their impious loyalty. Antiochus called himself Epiphanes, *the illustrious*, but by associating with the lowest description of rakes and libertines, and practising the most eccentric and disgusting dissipation, he caused others to change this splendid epithet into one more suitable, viz. Epimanes, *the madman*.

The persecution and oppression of the Jews, under this prince, far exceeded every thing of the kind, they had as yet experienced. On his re-

turn from Egypt, he came in person against Jerusalem, took it by storm, exposed it for three days to the wanton voracity of his soldiers, slew forty thousand of the inhabitants, and took as many more prisoners, whom he sold as slaves to the neighbouring nations.

That he might insult at once the Jews and their religion, Epiphanes entered into the most sacred recesses of the temple, caused them to be sprinkled with broth made of swine's flesh, and a huge pig to be sacrificed on the altar of burnt-offerings.

Having plundered the treasury, and stript the temple of all which was valuable, both gold, silver and tapestry, he appointed two brutish barbarians to govern, or rather persecute the Jews in his absence. Two years after, at the close of his fourth expedition into Egypt, being obliged by the Romans to evacuate that country, Epiphanes sent Apollonius with two and twenty thousand men under his command, to sack the cities and towns of Judea, to put the men to the sword, and to collect the women and children for sale. Apollonius heightened the rigour of his oppression by perfidy; for he entered Jerusalem with appearances and professions of peace, and concealed his commission until the sabbath day, when he took a cruel and cowardly advantage of a religious scruple of the Jews, and murdered them by thousands in the temple and in the synagogues.

Epiphanes now fixed his residence at Antioch,

whence he issued a decree, requiring uniformity in religion, and commanding all nations in his dominions to abandon their old gods, and to worship those of the king, and in the same manner as he did. This decree, though general, was directed specially against the Jews, and was made as comprehensive as the empire, in order that it might afflict them the more extensively.

Athenæus, an old hierophant, was sent to Jerusalem to see the royal decree put into execution, and to initiate the people in the new mysteries: he dedicated the temple of Jehovah to the Olympian Jupiter, and erected the statue of that idol on the altar of burnt-offerings. At the same time, altars and chapels for idols were multiplied through the province, and the king dispersed his soldiers as so many troops of missionaries, to make proselytes to his religion. Any who circumcised their children, offered sacrifices to the God of Israel, or opposed the idolatrous innovations, were obnoxious to torture and death.

The savage outrages committed by the king's agents, obliged the Jews to seek for safety among the rocks and caverns of the mountains; but their persecutors, swift to shed innocent blood, were in haste to pursue them: about a thousand men, women, and children, were massacred on the Sabbath day, without offering any resistance, in a cave near Jerusalem.

The king, hearing that his orders were opposed, came to Jerusalem, to punish the recusants with

the utmost severity. The first who felt the violence of his rage, was Eleazar, a man ninety years old, and venerable for his wisdom and sanctity. The king's officers having in vain used all their arts to make him conform and eat swine's flesh, dragged him to the place of execution, where he endured inhuman tortures with manly fortitude, until death put an end to his sufferings. After him seven brethren with their aged mother, came forward, and after reproving the wickedness of their tormentors, magnanimously resigned their lives, to preserve their consciences. These enormities, with many others too gross to be particularized, were done, not in the licentiousness of popular tumult, but according to the orders, and under the inspection of the infamous Epiphanes.

There lived at this time in Modin, a priest whose name was Mattathias, a great-grandson of Asmonæus, from whom the family were afterwards called Asmonæans. This man, though far advanced in years, was alike remarkable for his prudence and his courage.

Apelles, one of the king's emissaries, came to Modin to enforce the act of uniformity, and having assembled the inhabitants, exhorted them to conform as became good subjects. To Mattathias, to whom the harangue was chiefly directed, was held out the specious lure of fair promises, as an additional motive to compliance. But Mattathias was not to be purchased by royal favour and royal bounty: he therefore answered,

so that he might be heard by all in the assembly, That though the whole nation and the whole world, were to conform to the king's edict, both he and his sons, would resist to the last.

Mattathias had five sons, all animated with the intrepidity and zeal of their father, and resolved to make one bold effort for their lives and liberties, by opposing strength to strength, and violence to violence. They began by killing an apostate Jew, who was about to sacrifice according to the king's injunction; they next slew the King's commissioner with his party, and overthrew the idolatrous altar which they had set up; and then, calling upon all who wished to keep the law and the covenant to follow them, retired to the mountains. They were followed by considerable numbers of their brethren, who united with them, not only in defence of their persons, but in demolishing the idols which defiled their land, and in scattering their persecutors.

Reflecting that many of their brethren had perished through a scrupulous regard to the Sabbath, they considered the matter, and agreed, that they both might, and ought, to defend themselves in case they were attacked on that sacred day.

Mattathias, having spent a year in opposing the ruin of his country, found himself exhausted with fatigue, age, and infirmity, and, calling together his sons, exhorted them to expose their lives when necessary for the protection of their laws and reli-

gion. "It is true," said the dying hero, "our bodies are mortal; but great and generous actions will make us immortal in our memory; and that is the glory I would have you aspire to. Be sure, in the first place, to agree among yourselves, and in what case-soever any one has the advantage, give way to him; as for example, it being Simon's faculty to judge well, make him your counsellor. Judas is a man for military conduct and bravery, make him your general. Be strenuous, and men of honour and piety will join with you."

The world has not wanted examples of individuals and nations, fully sensible of their own right to religious liberty, to whom it has not occurred that all other people have as good a right to it as themselves. The Jews knew, that for the king of Syria to interfere with their religion, was odious and impious tyranny, and by being deprived of this liberty, their sense of its value was enhanced.

When a people combine to throw off the yoke of oppression, and to recover by force of arms, their civil and religious immunities, snatched from them in despite of the laws of God and of nature, acts of desperate and almost incredible valour may be expected.

Judas, surnamed Maccabæus,* succeeded

* There are various opinions concerning the derivation of this word. The most general is, that it was derived from the initials of four Hebrew words, worked on the standards of the Maccabees, *Mi camocah baelim Jehovah!*—Who among the gods, is like unto thee O Lord! Exod. xv. 11.—Some critics derive the word from

according to the advice of his father, in the command of the patriots, who encamped in the fastnesses of the mountains, whence they spread through the country, expelled the Syrians from many of the best fortresses which they supplied with garrisons, destroyed the implements of superstition, and set up altars according to the law of Moses.

The Maccabees, at this time, were not more than six thousand, but they supplied in courage what they wanted in numbers: Apollonius and Seron, who attacked them with large forces, were both killed, and their armies routed.

After this, the king, enraged at the obstinacy and successful resistance of the Maccabees, sent Lysias with forty thousand foot, and seven thousand horse, to exterminate them, and people the province with strangers. This host of warriors came attended with a train of merchants, provided with money to purchase, and fetters to confine, the captives. Judas, no way intimidated at superior numbers, engaged this mighty host with his handful of patriots, slew of them nine thousand, and put the remainder to flight.

These important victories were but a prelude to others of still greater consequence, by which an end was put to the Syrian despotism in Judea.

Makkab, a hammer or mallet, which they think agrees better with the original spelling of the word, and at the same time corresponds well with the event, as the Maccabees gave the Syrians a pounding.

Having expelled their persecutors, vindicated the independence of their country, and restored their laws and religion, the Jews, unhappily, found leisure and inclination, to disturb the peace of their neighbours.

Hyrcanus subdued the Idumæans, and instantly put them to the alternative of receiving circumcision and becoming Jews, or of quitting their country: the idolaters, thinking their land of more value than their religion, preferred the former.

In like manner, Aristobulus son and successor to Hyrcanus, conquered and converted the Ituræans. Alexander Jannæus took Pella and exiled the inhabitants, because they would not embrace Judaism. There was a strong propensity to this odious practice among the Asmonæan princes.*

* The question, How did the law of Moses require the Israelites to behave to persons of a religion different from their own, is pregnant with interesting and important consequences. The commission which God gave his chosen people to eject or destroy the aborigines of Canaan, was no part of that law by which they were bound to regulate their general conduct, nor did it afford any precedent on which they might act in any other instance. There is a law repeatedly inculcated in the Pentateuch, which explicitly and peremptorily directs them as to the way in which they should demean themselves to the stranger, which ought, I apprehend, to have regulated their carriage towards all persons differing from themselves in religion, with whom they had civil intercourse: —“ And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the

This family, otherwise illustrious, having by their patriotic heroism rescued their country and kindred from the intolerable oppression of Syria,

Lord your God." Levit. xix. 33. Comp. Exod. xxii. 21, and xxiii. 9. Levit. xxv. 35, and Deut. x. 18. 19. To take the word stranger as synonymous with proselyte, appears to me unwarrantable. The character and circumstances of the stranger, are illustrated by those of the sons of Jacob in Egypt, who were by no means proselytes to the gods of Egypt. Moreover, in the last of the passages just quoted, the stranger is described as one to whom God gave food and raiment; and he is thereby distinguished from that people, to whom, in addition to food and raiment, God gave laws and ordinances; and the Hebrews are called upon to imitate the beneficence of Jehovah in ministering to the temporal comfort of the stranger, and not by obtruding upon him the restraints or indulgences of their religion. This seems to have been the opinion of William Penn, who observes, that "the Jews who had the most to say for their religion, and whose religion was twin to their state (both being enjoined and sent with wonders from heaven,) indulged strangers in their religious dissent."

The Asmonæans in their wars of conquest and proselytism, committed a twofold transgression of the law of Moses: they needlessly disturbed the tranquillity of their neighbours, and made conformity to their religion, the term of their friendship.

The subtlety of some men in devising reasons for persecution, is surprising. The following citation from a commentator, called by his brethren *the eagle of the doctors*, is an instance of this faculty.

"We are obliged," says Maimonides, "to kill all the gentiles who refuse to keep the commandments Noah, if they are in our power. It is only to us who are the inheritance of Jacob, and to those of any other nation who will become proselytes, that Moses has given the law. For it is said, There shall be no difference between the proselyte and you. And therefore as to the law, let him embrace it that will; we force nobody to it; but as for the

held the sovereign power for the space of one hundred and twenty-nine years, when Antigonus was put to death by the Romans, and Herod the Idumæan, invested with the royal dignity. This is that Herod who held the sceptre at the time of the Messiah's advent, and who was so much alarmed by the Magi's coming to visit and pay their homage to him who was born king of the Jews.

During the broils which disturbed the tranquillity of the nation, under the last princes of the Asmonæan race, the rival sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees became numerous and powerful, and on many occasions, opposed each other with illiberal and sanguinary vehemence.

On the whole, while we applaud the Jews for the determined stand they made against the mad intolerance of Epiphanes, we cannot but lament that they did not pay more respect to the liberty of idolaters than to attempt their conversion by force, and that they were not more disposed to forbearance and moderation towards each other.

Generally speaking, they had degenerated much from the lofty hopes, and exemplary conduct of their ancestors, and stood in the utmost

commandments of Noah, Moses our master, who was taught by God himself, has commanded us to force all those who shall come into the world to observe them, and to kill all those who shall refuse."

Fleury's Manners of the Israelites, Part IV, Chap. I. 265.

need of their promised reformer when his approach was announced.*

* "It is incumbent on us," says Mr. Gibbon, "to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence, when we discover, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, is omitted in the law of Moses."—*Decline and Fall, Chap. XV.* 294.

It is well indeed, if failing to be instructed by what Revelation teaches, we are rendered wise and devout by what it does not teach. But how did our learned historian discover, that this doctrine, without which religion is a phantom, was not taught in the law of Moses? In what sense was Jehovah the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the days of Moses? Their bodies were under the dominion of death, but *they* were alive; for God is not the God of the the dead, but of the living. (Luke xx. 37.) Where was the better country which the patriarchs sought, if they had no expectations beyond the present life; or, what was the recompence or reward to which Moses looked, when he relinquished the honours of the Egyptian court? According to Mr. Gibbon's sentiments, the Sadducees, whom our Lord refuted, were strictly orthodox. It must be allowed, however, that this sublime doctrine was but obscurely taught by the law of Moses, as were many others of high import; but the obscurity is removed, and the subject is encircled with copious light by the Gospel. 2 Tim. i. 10.

CHAPTER III.

*From the introduction of the Evangelical Economy
to the end of the Sacred History.*

THE gospel dispensation was introduced by John the Messiah's harbinger, according to that well known prophecy, Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. This great prophet was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were alike venerable for their rectitude before men, and their piety before God. We know but little of John prior to his entrance on his ministry, when he appeared as a herald, crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

His dress was plain, his manners severe, and his meat such as the wilderness afforded.

He was attended by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, of Judea, and of the region round about Jordan, to whom he announced the kingdom of Heaven, and administered the baptism of repentance. The baptist addressed his countrymen with much plainness and pungency; cautioned them against presuming on their relationship to Abraham, apprised them that God was about to execute judgment on the wicked, and raised their

expectations of one, who was about to come, far greater than himself, and to whom he was not worthy to perform the most menial offices. While thus engaged, Jesus, that he might fulfil all righteousness, came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of John. The precursor of the Messiah now beheld, for the first time, that divine greatness which he had before proclaimed ; and he had the satisfaction of seeing his predictions speedily accomplished in the miraculous manifestation of God's beloved Son.

The baptist was much in favour with the people in general ; but it does not appear that he was held in equal estimation by the heads of the nation.

The spreading fame of the prophet induced Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, to send for him to his court. It is probable that Herod was moved to this act of courtesy, either by a wish to gratify his curiosity, or to render himself popular. The baptist, took with him to the court of Herod the same inflexible integrity, which he had practised and inculcated in the desert, and he soon found occasion for its exercise there. The tetrarch was married to the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia Petræa : he injured and offended the wife of his youth, by his criminal and scandalous familiarity with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living. The baptist told him, it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. Herodias was at once niece and

sister-in-law to Herod, and therefore there was in his offence a mixture of incest and adultery. John's reproof seems to have been free from acrimony and exaggeration, and to have united the *suaviter in modo*, with the *fortiter in re*; yet, it so displeased the king, that he ordered the prophet to be taken into immediate custody. It is likely that the Baptist's high reputation with the people protected him for a while from farther violence.—But Herod grew more bold in transgression: probably his courtiers suggested to him, that kings have no law, but their pleasure;—that as to the rules of justice and temperance, they are exalted to enforce, not obey them; and that, having a divine right to their thrones, they need not fear the wrath of their subjects. But whatever were the circumstances of Herod; whether hardened in his sin by continuance in it, or prompted to further wickedness by evil counsellors; and whether his sorrow, when he found himself under the obligation of an oath to behead the Baptist, was real, or affected—it is certain, that the intriguing and implacable Herodias was mainly accessory to his death. Salome, daughter of this lewd and revengeful woman, by the husband she had left, danced before Herod, on his birth-day, and so mightily charmed him, that he promised her with an oath, whatsoever she should ask to the half of his kingdom: the girl, instructed by her mother, (in whom she had an infamous adviser,) asked the head of John, the Baptist, in a dish. The pe-

tition was granted. Though an absurd oath, wantonly given, was the best reason the king could plead, for taking away the life of a just man and a renowned prophet, we do not find that he was called to an account for his folly and wickedness. Who is there that will not sin when he can do it with impunity? In the courts of despotic princes, we look for judgment, and behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. The liberty of doing what is wrong, is a bad privilege. When the fame of the wisdom and miracles of Christ came to the ears of Herod, his conscience, more just than his subjects, terrified him, by bringing his guilt to his remembrance, and caused him to say to his servants—This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show themselves in him.

The wife of Herod, who had been superseded by Herodias, got permission to go to the castle of Machæras, which was on the borders of her father's dominions, where she obtained an escort of Arabian guards to conduct her to her father's palace. There had already been some dispute between Aretas and Herod concerning the limits of their respective territories, which was now brought to the issue of a war, wherein the latter met with a total defeat.

“ Now the generality of the Jews were of opinion, says Josephus,* “ that this was only a just judg-

* Antiquities, Book XVIII. chap. 7.

ment of God upon Herod and his army, for the business of John, surnamed the Baptist, which excellent man this tetrarch murdered.

And what was his crime, but only his exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and in the first place, of piety and justice, and to a regeneration by baptism, and a new life, not by abstaining from this or that particular sin, but by a habitual purity of mind, as well as of body."

As to the future fortunes of Herod, we are told by the historian we have just quoted, that, having incurred the displeasure of the Emperor Caligula, he was condemned to perpetual exile and confinement at Lyons, in Gaul.

The Messiah.

Our attention is now called to the Son of the Highest. It was supposed by the ancients, that if virtue were to become incarnate, universal love and admiration would be thereby excited.

The Son of God, far exceeded in every excellence the most finished and enchanting fictions of the ancients, yet when he appeared in the world, "the world knew him not." The Jews were trained to receive him; their ceremonial law was nonsense without him; in him centered their faith and their hope; he had bestowed distinguishing favours upon them, and made them in a special sense his own: at the appointed time, according

to the intimations of successive prophets, he came to visit his own, but "his own received him not." Nay, in the room of receiving and honoring, they despised and hated him.

There are some passions which are innocent and virtuous within certain bounds, but wicked when indulged to excess; but malice and rancour are in no case allowable. Yet these passions inspired with the fanaticism of bigotry, were let loose with a vengeance on the Son of God!

Let us attend, for a few moments, to Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, in the conspiracy they formed against the Lord's Anointed. It is evident that the evangelists have given us a minute and impartial narrative of the proceedings, which ended in the death of Christ; and therefore, we may with freedom and boldness, make such remarks on the conduct of the Jews and the Romans, as the history suggests.

The first thing which strikes the reader is the indecent eagerness of the Jews to bring about the crucifixion of Christ. They were forward to listen to Judas, and to satisfy his avarice, that they might avail themselves of his perfidy; they accompanied the traitor to the garden whither his master had retired, and brought him, at a late hour of the night, to the palace of the chief priest: here he was arraigned, not that he might receive justice, but that his adversaries might have an opportunity of venting their malevolence towards

him, under the forms of their law : when he was condemned, his prosecutors did not treat him with that decent lenity, which is generally shewn to prisoners under sentence of death, but they spit in his face, and struck him with the palm of their hands.

Early in the morning, the priests and elders, hurried away Jesus to the tribunal of Pilate, that they might prevail on him, to ratify and execute their unrighteous sentence. Here, though they came at an unusual hour, they met with no rude repulse from the representative of Roman majesty ; and, because it was against their religious scruples to enter into his judgment hall, Pilate went out to them, and demanded what accusation they brought against the prisoner.

Christ was accused of blasphemy and sedition ; the former, to make him obnoxious to the populace, the latter, to the government ; but Pilate found no fault in him. Let it be remembered, that it was in the spiritual court the Just One was condemned : in the secular court, those who vociferated, Let him be crucified ! let him be crucified ! were asked, Why ; what evil hath he done ?

Understanding that Christ was of Galilee, Pilate, to rid himself of the importunities of the Jews, sent him bound to Herod, tetrarch of that country. Christ had already witnessed before Pilate the good confession, *that he was indeed a king*, although he thereby exposed himself both to ridicule and danger.

Herod, though a Jew, and under the most solemn obligation to acquaint himself with the oracles of the Old Testament, was so ignorant of the nature of that royalty which the prophets ascribed to the Messiah, that a king without soldiers, without a retinue, and without pomp and power, appeared to him a fit subject for merriment; and notwithstanding he had heard of the fame of his miracles, he joined with his persecutors, and having arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, in derision of his kingship, sent him back to Pilate.

The governor, being still further confirmed in the opinion, that the prosecution was wholly malicious, and that the prisoner was perfectly innocent, made several ineffectual attempts to release him. It was usual for the Roman governor to grace the celebration of the passover with an act of mercy—the liberation of a prisoner; Pilate, therefore, nominated Christ, and left them no alternative but to release him, or Barabbas, a notorious offender, convicted of capital crimes. The infatuated people, at the instance of the priests and elders, demanded that Christ should be crucified, and Barabbas set at liberty. To a vicious and incorrigible people, a man laden with the triple guilt of sedition, theft, and murder, is more acceptable, than a reformer.

When Pilate found that he could not thus elude the vigilance of the Jews, he delivered up Christ to the soldiers to be scourged, hoping thereby to satisfy the vengeful passions of his persecutors;—

here, again, the immaculate sufferer was treated with the utmost cruelty and scorn.

Pilate again brought Jesus forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and probably covered with gore, and said—Behold the man! thinking to move pity. But there is no pity in intolerance. When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they cried out, with the same unfeeling barbarity as before—Crucify him, crucify him. Shall christians persecute, when the author of christianity fell a victim to persecution!

When Pilate found that it was wholly vain to oppose the torrent of popular violence, he took water, and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person—see ye to it.

The whole multitude, challenged the curse of his blood, upon themselves and their children; and since nothing short of his death, would suffice their malice, Pilate gave sentence, that it should be as they pleased. The depraved and deluded Jews having thus far obtained their wishes, proceeded with savage joy, to imbrue their hands in the blood of that deliverer, for whose coming they had so often prayed, and whose day, prophets and kings had desired to see. To encrease the ignominy of his death, they executed him between two malefactors. Well might the sun refuse to shine on such a complicated scene of injustice and impiety, and the earth tremble to support it.

When the Roman centurion witnessed this sym-

pathetic derangement and convulsion of nature, although he knew not the character of Jesus, nor yet the predictions that were fulfilled in that eventful hour, he exclaimed—Truly this man was the Son of God!

The intolerant zealotism of the Jews at this period, was a potent cause of crimes and miseries. It was this which prevented their seeing, in the miracles and ministry of Christ, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: seen, through the distorted medium of prejudice and hatred, the Desire of their nation appeared without form or comeliness, and as having no beauty, on account of which, he should be sought. There was a general expectation of his coming, in the peaceful days of Augustus, when he actually appeared; the time, place, and circumstances of his birth, together with his doctrine, miracles, and manner of life, corresponded with the predictions of the prophets; but all was in vain.

If Christ had appeared and taught in Italy, in the room of Judea, it is not probable that he would have been put to death, much less to the reproachful death of the cross. Pilate was far from being the most virtuous of the Romans, yet his conduct as a magistrate, was liberal, just, and humane, in comparison with that of the high-priest, and the sanhedrim.

Pilate erred through want of firmness and resolution: there were vast crowds of the Jews assembled for the celebration of the passover; he

dreaded their rage, and feared lest his military force should prove unequal to the preservation of the peace. It is certain too, that this governor had been guilty of several flagitious acts of mal-administration, and it is likely, that on this account, he the more feared to create himself enemies, even by the discharge of his duty. One act of injustice, often supplies strong inducements, to commit others.

Bigotry and superstition often go together: the nature of each is illustrated in the history of our Lord's crucifixion. While the Jews, with fervid hatred, clamoured for innocent blood, they were so conscientious, that they would not put their feet into Pilate's judgment-hall, *lest they should be defiled*. Having carried their malignant conspiracy into effect, and deliberately violated the sixth commandment, they still respect the fourth, and request Pilate that the bodies may be taken down, lest the sabbath should be polluted. Impiety and wickedness are never so formidable, as when they assume the garb of godliness.

If any man thinks to exculpate the Jews, by saying, that the sufferings of Christ, were fore-ordained and necessary, let him remember, that God's *laws*, and not his *decrees*, are the rule of duty.

The passions which prompted and impelled the murderers of Christ, were precisely those, which have been the life and soul of nearly all persecutions carried on by Christians. How successful

was infernal artifice, in causing men to be reckoned faithful and worthy followers of Christ, in proportion to the ardour with which, they emulated the example of his murderers!

The mutual ill-will of the Jews and Samaritans.

Samaria was built by Omri, king of Israel, and was for a considerable time a flourishing city.— Though situate on a hill, it was well watered, a circumstance commemorated by medals struck there, representing the goddess Astarte, standing on a stream.

John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, rased it to the ground, and caused the brook to flow over its ruins. This prince likewise, in his destructive zeal, demolished the temple built by Sanballat on Mount Gerizim, in the vicinity of Shechem, two hundred years after its erection. Samaria was rebuilt and decorated by Herod the Great, and called Sebaste, in honour of his friend and patron Augustus.

The Samaritans were originally idolaters. At this time, they were infested with lions, which devoured them—a calamity which the king of Assyria attributed to their ignorance of the right method of worshipping the tutelar divinity of the land: he, therefore, sent for a Hebrew priest to instruct them, and they then worshipped idols in

conjunction with the God of Israel, and were not sensible of the absurdity of the mixture.

The scripture history does not insinuate that the Samaritans were guilty of devotion to idols after the termination of the captivity of Babylon; still, however, they and the Jews were far from being cordial friends. The hostility which subsisted between them, as also some particulars of their controversies, are alluded to in the fourth chapter of the evangelist John.

The woman who came to Jacob's well to draw water, at the time that our Lord, weary with his journey, was resting himself, wondered that he, being a Jew, asked water of her who was a woman of Samaria.

The reason of the woman's astonishment was, that the Jews made it a rule to have no dealings with the Samaritans, but would endure any inconvenience rather than be under obligation to them. Doctor Lightfoot tells us, on the authority of the Rabbins, that the Jews proceeded so far in this unsociable and rancorous zeal, as to pronounce the Samaritans unworthy of a part in the resurrection—to excommunicate and curse them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment; and to decree that no Israelite should eat of that which is a Samaritan's, but should regard it as swine's flesh.

Our Lord was far from chiming with his countrymen in this extravagant antipathy to their

neighbours : he not only condescended to receive, but made so free as to ask water of a Samaritan woman, who could not conceal her admiration at such an unusual stretch of freedom. Had the Pharisees been present, it is likely they would have reproached our Lord as a friend to schismatics and sinners.

It is worthy of notice, that though the woman of Samaria introduced explicitly that topic of controversy between her nation and their neighbours, relating to the place where God ought to be worshipped, yet our Lord declined giving any decision on it.

In this point, the Samaritans were doubtless wrong ; and the conduct of our Lord admonishes us, that when treating with our erring brethren, we ought not to upbraid them with their errors, but to instruct them with gentleness and benignity.

In one point of the dispute, the Samaritans were certainly right, viz. their considering the written law *only* of divine original, whereas the Jews set the traditions of men above the law of God, and thereby made it void.

The reason why our Lord enjoined his twelve disciples, when he sent them out to preach, not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, was not, I conceive, what some affirm, that the Samaritans were schismatics, but simply, that they were not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The zealots of Jerusalem would not allow to

their dissenting brethren the capability of religion here, or of happiness hereafter. We are happy to find different intimations given by one who knew what was in man, and whose judgment was always according to truth.

A certain man fell among thieves, and was stripped and wounded, and left half dead; a priest and a Levite came by, and saw this miserable object, and passed on; but a certain *Samaritan*, as he journeyed, came, and saw him, and had compassion on him—bound up his wounds—set him on his own beast—brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Ten lepers were cleansed: *one only* returned to give thanks, and *he* was a *Samaritan*.

As Christ was going up to Jerusalem, he sent messengers, who entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him: the villagers, understanding that he was directing his course to Jerusalem, would not receive him. James and John were so angry at this indignity offered to their master, that they wanted permission to command fire from Heaven, to consume the inhabitants of the village, in like manner as Elias served the soldiers of Ahaziah. Christ passed no censure on the incivility of the Samaritans, but rebuked his disciples for their rash and cruel proposal, observing to them, that they knew not of what spirit they were.

As if he said, both to them and their successors:—"It is no longer the time of menaces and

torments. You live under a law whose spirit is not the spirit of terror, but the spirit of confidence and love. The master whom you serve does not thirst after the blood of his enemies : he does not choose to see them at his feet, in a fit of rage and despair. Forced homages are odious in his eyes. Thunder and the exterminating sword are not his arms. He is only come to convert and save souls ; but not to destroy or famish the bodies of men.*

Persecution of the early Professors and Teachers of Christianity.

The disciples of Christ, on several occasions, showed a suspicious curiosity respecting the kingdom which they imagined he was about to establish. Their dreams of secular honour and importance were repeatedly disturbed by predictions of ignominy, sufferings, and death ; and, in the crucifixion of their master, they saw a sample of what they had to expect. There was, however, so much patriotism in their faith, and the hope of national independence and of temporal grandeur was so fondly cherished by them, that when assembled at Jerusalem, after the resurrection, they asked, " Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel." The ascent of Christ to

* O'Leary's Miscellaneous Tracts, 340.

heaven, and the effusion of the holy spirit on the day of pentecost, with the discoveries and endowments which were thereby communicated to the apostles and disciples, dissipated these gay delusions.

We henceforward find the servants of Christ engaged in labours becoming their character and office, working miracles by the name and power of Jesus, in proofs of their divine mission, and in teaching the way of life. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day.*

Accordingly on the morrow the rulers, elders, and scribes, with the high-priest and his train, forming the grand council of the nation, came together; the apostles were called for, and it was demanded of them, by what power, or in what name they had restored the impotent man? Peter solemnly assured his judges, that it was by the name of Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead, that the man stood whole before them. The rulers of Israel were now in great perplexity: that a notable miracle had been wrought, they could not deny, and having been performed at the temple,

* Acts, iv.

at the hour of prayer, it was manifest to all who dwelt in Jerusalem: to punish the apostles for such an astonishing act of mercy, would be to render themselves odious to the people, and therefore they resolved to threaten them, and enjoin them to speak no more in the name of Jesus. There were several circumstances connected with the apostles and their ministry vexatious to the council; they were not of the priestly order, and therefore seemed to take upon themselves an honor which belonged to none but those who were called of God, as was Aaron; they were illiterate and private men; their doctrine was against the creed of the Sadducees, who were now in authority; they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead; and, what was worse than all beside, they taught this sublime truth in a way, which not only involved the Sadducees in error, but also involved the whole nation in the guilt of innocent blood. The resurrection of Christ proved that he was no imposter; and, if no impostor, the promised Messiah, and they who brought about his death were the betrayers of their expected deliverer, and the murderers of an innocent person. These consequences the apostles declared and enforced, and therefore when called a second time before the Sanhedrim, the high-priest charged them with having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, and with intending to bring this man's (Christ's) blood upon them.* The chief priest,

* Acts, v. 28.

therefore, with the sect of the Sadducees, were indignant at a strain of doctrine which reflected on them as denying the truth in a momentous article, and as having been guilty of a most flagrant violation of justice.

The apostles persisted in their testimony, and averred in the presence of their judges, that the God of their fathers had raised up Jesus whom they had slain and hanged on a tree, had exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel, and that they were witnesses of these things.

The Sadducees were notorious for being severe in judgment, and when they heard these things their rage rose to its zenith, they were tortured with the violence and malignity of their own passions, and took counsel to slay the apostles.

Then stood there up in the council a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, a man highly respected for his knowledge and good sense, and commanded to take the apostles out for a short time. He then proceeded to caution his brethren against intolerant rashness; reminded them of impostors, who had risen and fallen without their interference; and advised them to let the apostles alone—because, if christianity were an imposition it would come to nought, and that if it were not, they could not overthrow it:—if they acted otherwise, they might be found to fight against God.

Gamaliel was no secret friend to the apostles,

or their cause : supposing christianity to be an imposture, he had as much ill will to it as any in the council, but he was an enemy to that ignorant and intemperate zeal which often violates the rules of equity and common sense, and defeats its own purposes.

The point at issue between Gamaliel and the Sadducees was the proper manner of treating a new doctrine, decidedly against the established religion ; he intimates, that if false, to persecute it is superfluous ; if true, unjust and impious ; and that, therefore, it ought to be left alone to stand by its own truth, or fall by the want of it. This wise and venerable senator seems to have had a modest sense of his own fallibility, and a firm persuasion that it was much better to be moderate and mild, than impetuous and cruel. The address of Gamaliel succeeded so far as to save the apostles from immediate death, but they were beaten, and charged to speak no more in the name of Jesus.

The correction the apostles received was unmerited and ignominious, but they were no way disconcerted or discouraged by it, but departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of the Lord ; and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and preach Jesus Christ.

Stephen, the Proto-Martyr,

Was one of the seven deacons chosen by the primitive church to minister to the wants of the poor, and being filled with the divine energy of spiritual gifts, he taught, and performed great wonders and miracles among the people in support of his doctrine.

There was at this time a great influx of strangers, both Hebrews and proselytes, in Jerusalem, who had come to worship at the feast.

Among the four hundred and eighty synagogues said to have been in this spacious and splendid city, there was one called the Synagogue of the Libertines, i. e. such Jews and proselytes, with their descendants, as, having been Roman slaves, had attained their liberty by favour of their masters, or otherwise the inhabitants of a certain town or district of Lybia called Libertina. Certain of these, with others from Cyrenia, Alexandria, Cilicia, (among whom was probably Saul of Tarsus,) and Asia Minor, arose and disputed with Stephen, and not being able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. From the sequel, it appears, that the blasphemy with which Stephen was accused was no more than constructive; for when the false witnesses deposed against

him before the Sanhedrim, they said—This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, (the temple, in an apartment of which the council was held,) and against the law. To say that the temple should be destroyed, was to blaspheme God, in honour of whom it was built, and to say, that the law should be changed or abrogated, was to revile Moses, by whom it was given.

It was in vain that Stephen reminded his prosecutors and judges, that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and that their ancestors received special and convincing proofs of the divine mercy towards them, long before they had a temple, or so much as a tabernacle: perceiving that their patience was exhausted, and that he had no time to lose, Stephen faithfully and sharply reproved them for resisting the Holy Ghost, persecuting the prophets, and slaying the Just One. The august council, under the impetus of intolerant bigotry, paid as little regard to their own dignity as to common justice; for when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, not with remorse, but with rage, and so far forgot the decorum and order due to the presence of law and judgment, that they gnashed on the prisoner with their teeth. How much under the power of persecuting zealotism, must the rulers and people of Israel have been, when in a matter of life and death, it made them act rather as tygers than as judges! *Gnashing the teeth*, is frequently men-

tioned in the Scripture as an expression of the despair, horror, and torment of the damned, the reverse of which is the tranquil joy of wisdom and conscious rectitude.

The composure of Stephen in this turbulent scene, showed him to advantage as a follower of the Lamb—full of the Holy Ghost, a living image of the truth with its attendant graces, he looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. These singular circumstances, no way softened or intimidated the persecutors of Stephen; nay, what consoled him, and filled him with calm intrepidity, stung them to the quick, insomuch, that they vociferated, stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord; and they stoned Stephen, committing his spirit to Jesus, and praying for the pardon of his murderers.*

Saul of Tarsus.

The writer of the Acts concludes his account of Stephen's martyrdom, by telling us, that Saul was consenting to his death.

“In executions of this kind, it was usual for those who had borne witness against the criminal, to cast the first stone. And for that purpose, they put off their upper garments, and gave them to be

* Acts, vii.

kept by persons equally hearty in the prosecution with themselves. At the stoning of Stephen, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of our Saul; by which he is pointed out, as consenting to the condemnation and punishment of that blessed martyr.* The stoning of Stephen was an act of popular fury, and seems to have happened in the interval which occurred between the removal of Pontius Pilate from the government, and the accession of Herod Agrippa.

The Jews, exasperated by the bold and pungent admonitions of Stephen, gladly embraced this opportunity for a general persecution, by which the church at Jerusalem, (the apostles excepted) was scattered abroad, and the believers so dispersed, preached the gospel throughout Judea and Samaria. But they did not escape the watchful eyes of Saul, who breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way (of this new and obnoxious religion) whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Saul was a native Hebrew, a rigid Pharisee, had been a pupil of the famous Gamaliel, from whom he had derived much learning, but no moderation—he was blest by nature with a noble capacity either for learning or teaching, and was

* Macknight's Life of the Apostle Paul.

equally ardent and persevering in whatever he undertook.

In the study of the law, he had made progress beyond those who were of equal age with himself, and was extremely zealous of the traditions of the fathers: the disciples soon felt the dire effects of his mistaken zeal, for he made havoc of the church as a beast of prey, and entered into every house which he suspected for containing any guilty of believing in Christ, and dragging out men and women, committed them, without respect to age or sex, to prison. From the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts, it appears that this account of Saul's wild and destructive rage is by no means exaggerated; for when giving an account of this part of his life before Agrippa, he confesses that many of the saints did he shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them—that he punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even to strange cities.

It was well for the primitive church that this sanguine inquisitor was not allowed to continue long in his infernal calling: as he approached Damascus, to execute there his commission, the Son of God appeared to him in a stream of light, an emblem of the dispensation, of which he was about to be made a minister, and addressed him in Hebrew—Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? This was at noon-day, and in the open country,

where no illusion could be practised; and so dazzling was this vision of the person and glory of Immanuel, that Saul was thrown into the utmost consternation, and asked, *Who art thou Lord?* His amazement and agitation must have been encreased by the answer, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest*—he little thought that the Nazarene, whose followers he was labouring to extirpate, as cursed heretics, was the Lord of Glory. Now the mighty current of his soul was turned, he becomes obedient to the faith which he had laboured to destroy, and enquires of that Jesus whom he had often anathematized, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* The conversion of Saul was not one of those commotions of passion which are sometimes mistaken for conversion, the effects of which are as transient as their cause is unsteady. Saul became a new man both as to the sentiments of his heart, and the tenor of his life, and to the last, under every diversity of privation and peril, he continued to support that cause which before, he had so strenuously opposed.

From the memoirs, whose important and interesting details we are now pursuing, we learn, that this distinguished man became as eminent for sustaining, as he had been for inflicting, the evils of intolerance.

The Martyrdom of James, and the Imprisonment of Peter.

Now about that time, (the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar and the forty-fourth of our æra,) Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.* This was Herod Agrippa, grandson to that Herod in whose reign our Lord was born, and who laid snares for his life, and nephew to Herod Antipas, who imprisoned John the Baptist for reproofing his incestuous marriage with Herodias, and father of Agrippa, before whom Paul afterwards defended himself. Josephus says, “he was a common friend and patron to all strangers, and in truth to all mankind; but bountiful, good-natured, and compassionate to those of his own country and profession in the first place—that he made choice of Jerusalem for his constant residence—that no man could be stricter in the rules and formalities of his religion, and that not a day passed over his head without a sacrifice”†

Some men are made better, and some worse, by their religion. Agrippa withstood other incen-

* Acts, xii.

† Antiquities, Book XIX. chap. 7.

tives to injustice and oppression, but practised both in defence of his religion—a proof either that it was a bad one, or that he badly understood it. James was a just man and a good subject, and chargeable with no fault whatever, of which the magistrate could take notice, except schism, but this was so criminal in the eyes of the king, that he had him executed in a very summary way.— This was that James, the son of Zebedee, who, with his brother John, petitioned our Lord for the chief honours of his kingdom, and to whom he promised, after reproving their mistaken ambition, that they should drink of the cup of which he drank, and be baptized with the baptism with which he was to be baptized. We here see the fulfilment of the prediction so far as it respected James, who was put to death for teaching doctrines offensive to the Jews. When Agrippa saw that no immediate judgment followed this effort of zeal, and that it was pleasing to the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter, whom he accordingly seized, committed him to prison bound with two chains, and delivered him to four companies of soldiers, consisting of four each, who were to relieve each other in watching the prisoner, intending to make an example of him directly after the passover, while Jerusalem was crowded with strangers, who would then see how resolutely the king opposed the new heresy. But the apostle of the circumcision had not yet accomplished his ministry, and therefore, on the night preceding his

intended execution, while he was sleeping serenely between his guards, the angel of the Lord appeared, surrounded with much light, and miraculously delivered him, to the great joy of the believers, and the no less mortification of the king and his intolerant subjects. The only further accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles respecting this prince, relate to his going down to Cesarea, giving audience to the Tyrian and Sidonian ambassadors, being extravagantly applauded, and judicially punished for his pride. It is evident, that Josephus wished well to the memory of Agrippa, notwithstanding which, he has left an account of his miserable death, which strikingly coincides with the Acts. The king's business at Cesarea was the celebration of games and shows in honour of Claudius Cæsar, to whom he was indebted for a large accession to his dominions.

On the second day of the festival, Agrippa went early in the morning to the theatre, arrayed in a silver robe, extremely curious in its texture, and magnificent in its appearance, the splendour of which was increased by the reflections of the solar rays. In this dazzling attire, the king addressed an oration to the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon, in which he displayed at once his eloquence, power, and clemency. When the king had ended his speech, a crowd of fawning sycophants complimented him as a god, and besought him to forgive them the sins of their ignorance, when they mistook him for flesh and blood only.

It does not appear, that the king had used artifice to procure this stupid apotheosis ; but he did not rebuke the wretched parasites as they deserved, which was exceedingly criminal in him as a Jew, and therefore he was smitten by an invisible messenger, who, in the sudden and excruciating pains which he inflicted, gave him a sad *memento* of his mortality.

Paul and Silas at Philippi.—Acts, XVI.

From the tenth verse of this chapter it appears, that Luke, the writer of the Acts, joined Paul and his companions at Troas, a town of Phrygia Minor, in which ancient Troy is supposed to have stood, as he uses the first person plural, for the first time, in speaking of their departure from that place—And after he (Paul) had seen the vision (a man of Macedonia saying—Come over and help us), immediately *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia—therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, (an island of the Ægean sea, near to Thrace, and famous for certain mysteries, instituted in honour of the Cabiri,) and the next day to Neapolis (the *new city*, a sea port of Macedon,) and thence to Philippi. Here, by the ministry of the apostles and his associates, was formed that church to which, while a prisoner at Rome, he addressed an epistle which abounds with expressions of gratitude and

esteem. This city was situate on the river Strymon, and derived its name from Philip II. father of Alexander. In the vicinity of Philippi were mines, the gold of which Philip, the first who coined gold in his own name, employed, together with his arms, in destroying the liberties of Greece.

In the reign of Philip V. who enraged the Romans by entering into an alliance with Annibal, their formidable adversary, Macedon was subdued by that victorious people, and made a Roman province.

There was no synagogue in Philippi, but there were a few Jews, or rather Jewesses, who had, at a small distance from the town, by the river side, a *proseucha*, or house for public prayer, to which the apostle and his companions resorted on the sabbath day, and preached the gospel to the women who were assembled there. Amongst these was Lydia, a seller of purple, who had come from Thyatira to Philippi for the advantage of trade, a woman who worshipped the true God according to the law of Moses, and whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. The apostle and his fellow-labourers were constrained by Lydia to dwell in her house during their stay at Philippi; and as they went frequently to the oratory, or house of prayer, by the river side, they attracted the notice of a female slave, who was supposed to be inspired by the Pythian Apollo, and who

brought her owners much gains by divination.—The apostle put an end to this lucrative but iniquitous traffic; and when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and brought them to the magistrates, saying—These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. Avarice, baffled and chagrined, was the moving spring of this disorderly prosecution. Paul and Silas were taken for Jews, although the Jews were more inimical to them than any other people. But if Jews as Jews, were liable to such rough treatment, according to the laws of the Romans, how can we account for their being so generally tolerated and protected through the provinces of the Roman empire?*

It was no uncommon thing for the Jews to teach and to make converts from polytheism, but we do not find that they thereby drew upon themselves the displeasure of the Roman magistrates. The accusation hastily brought against Paul and Silas, was, that they taught illegal customs; their accusers did not know what they taught, but this was an artifice for exciting popular rage, and an-

* Mæcenas admonished Augustus, "*Deum patrio ritu cole, aliosque ad eum colendum coge, eos autem qui in his innovant, castiga.*" Tertullian says, that there was an ancient decree, that no new god should be consecrated unless approved by the senate.—Cicero, *de Legibus*, is cited to much the same effect.—Poole's *Synopsis*, Adam Clarke on Acts, xvi.

swered its purpose—for, the multitude rose up together against them, and probably would have torn them to pieces, if the lictors had not gratified their turbulent passions, by tearing off their clothes and beating them with their rods. This was the shameful treatment of which the apostle speaks in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, which he received at Philippi. After Paul and Silas had been beaten with *many* stripes, which no doubt were inflicted as unmercifully as they were unjustly, they were consigned to the gaoler, who, having received a special charge concerning them, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Thus mangled, incarcerated, and fettered, Paul and Silas, at midnight, prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. It does not seem, that these servants of the Most High, had as yet made any direct attempt to show to the pagans at Philippi the way of salvation, but the persecuting rage of the populace brought them into notice, and the miraculous way in which Providence interposed in their favour, enlarged the sphere of their preaching, and gave them converts when they least expected them.

Paul at Thessalonica, Beræa, and Athens,

Paul and Silas obtained an honourable release from their unjust imprisonment at Philippi, the

magistrates of which had committed themselves, in rashly punishing these strangers, at the instance of a turbulent and persecuting rabble, without making judicial inquiry into their innocence or guilt. When, early in the morning, the magistrates sent an order for the dismissal of the prisoners, Paul replied, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily?—nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out: the magistrates, therefore, came and apologised for their hasty violence, set the injured prisoners at liberty, and, to avoid farther disturbances, requested them to depart. They complied, and having passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, in which it is probable there were no Jews or proselytes, came to Thessalonica, which was at this time the metropolis of all the countries included in the province of Macedonia, and the residence of the Roman proconsul and quæstor. This city was formerly called Thermæ from the Thermaic gulph on which it was built, a situation which rendered it commodious for trade, and accounts for the great resort of Jews thither. Paul, according to his custom, went to the synagogue, and for three sabbaths reasoned with his countrymen out of the scriptures, expounding them, and proving by citations, that the Messiah must needs suffer and rise from the dead, and that this Jesus of Nazareth whom he preached was the true Messiah. Considera-

ble success attended the ministry of the apostle; but he had now to do with Jews, who engaged in their service a band of litigious and unprincipled lawyers,* who loved sedition for the emoluments it brought them, set the city in an uproar, assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to expose him to the wanton malice of an incensed mob.

It is probable that the police interposed and protected Jason from violence, whom, with certain brethren found in his house, they took before the rulers of the city. Here our evangelical itinerants were accused as revolutionists, who had already turned the world upside down, and as traitors who acknowledged another king, one Jesus, in contradistinction to Cæsar. It is likely, that the rulers saw reason to think that the persons accused were harmless, and that the tumult raised against them originated in zealotism and bigotry, but, to save appearances, they took security of Jason and his guests, for their good behaviour and appearance, when called for, and dismissed them. As the wisdom and moderation of the magistrates, deprived the persecutors of the object of their ignorant or malevolent calumnies, the brethren, fearing that their resentment might yet be fatal, sent away Paul and Silas by night to Beræa. Here they met with a race of people more noble than those from whom they had just made their

* Called in the common version, "lewd fellows of the baser sort."

escape, who received the word of life with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily that they might know whether the things advanced by Paul and Silas were as they affirmed. But the frenzy of intolerance is restless as the ocean. When the zealots at Thessalonica heard of the successful labours of Paul at Beræa, they pursued him, and endeavoured to obstruct his preaching, and to endanger his person, by misrepresentation and violence. He was, therefore, persuaded to proceed to Athens, while Silas and Timothy, being less notorious, remained to extend and confirm the good effects of his preaching at Beræa. In the christian churches, one planted, another watered, and God gave the increase. We are now come with a man—with an apostle, not a whit behind the greatest, to the seat of the muses, the graces, and the virtues.—The education, and the mental endowments and habits of the apostle, rendered him capable of feeling all the sublime emotions which the wisdom, arts, and institutions of Athens were adapted to inspire.

In this most interesting and renowned city, statues, temples, and monuments, every where met the eye, and at once presented specimens of the fine arts in perfection, and filled the mind with august ideas of the genius and taste of the artists. But business and pleasure often interfere; and it is probable, that the zeal and assiduity of the apostle, to discharge his duty as a faithful ambas-

sador of Christ, prevented his devoting much time to the antiquities and philosophy of the Athenians.

The historian tells us, that while Paul waited for his companions at Athens, his spirit was stirred when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry—an humbling proof of the expediency of divine revelation, and a powerful incentive to diligence in a benevolent teacher of it. It might have been expected, this city, which rose to such pre-eminence in knowledge, and in political and moral institutions, would have kept at an honourable distance from the debasing superstitions of other countries: in room of which, we have the mortification to find, that it was for nothing more remarkable than for the number and diversity of its idols. This circumstance caused Athens to be called the altar of Greece, and gave occasion to the satyrist to say, that it was there more easy to meet with a god than a man.

The Grecians in general, and the Athenians in particular, were so excessively superstitious, that they were not content with the worship of their ancient deities, but consecrated new ones of their own device; and beside these, assumed into the number of their own, the gods of all the nations with whom they had commerce. “It may be objected, that Socrates was condemned for no other crime than worshipping strange gods; but to this it is replied, that though the Athenians were desirous of new deities, yet none were worshipped till they had been approved and admitted

by the Areopagites.”* Some epicurean and stoic philosophers, conceiving the apostle to be a setter forth of strange gods, or dæmons, immediately brought him before these stern but illustrious judges. It was in the midst of the venerable assembly of Areopagus, that Paul delivered that apposite and eloquent address, in the beginning of which he acknowledges, that the Athenians were a people very much addicted to religious observances, and in which he proceeds to state, that as he passed by and beheld their devotions, he found an altar inscribed, *To the unknown God*. Here again, we are mortified to find, that in Athens, so justly celebrated for wisdom, and so crowded with divinities, the only living and true God, the creator of the world and of all things therein, was an *unknown* God. There are two particulars in the narrative of Paul’s ministry at Athens, on which it is pleasing to reflect. The first is the exhibition of christian zeal in the conduct of the apostle. He was deeply affected by the melancholy spectacle of an enlightened people, devoting so much of their time to the wild absurdities of idolatry—of a people dishonouring themselves by adoring Gods of their own creation. But he was not hurried away by an indiscreet fervor to acts of rudeness and violence—he did not throw down the images and altars, nor calumniate and curse those who resorted to them: his spirit was moved with compassion for them,

* Potter’s Antiquities of Greece, Book II. chap. 1.

and zeal for God, and he indulged these generous emotions, without disturbing the peace, or violating the decorum of society, while he maintained truth, and opposed error, by instructions and reasoning.

The second is, the moderating and restraining influence of knowledge and science on a superstitious people. To what else can we attribute the lenity with which Paul was treated in this focus of idolatry? There were more idols in Athens than in all Greece beside, and twice as many religious festivals as in any other city; but the man who boldly remonstrated against the whole system was heard with patience, and dismissed without censure. It is no weak proof of the superior intelligence and civilization of Athens, that the constituted guardians of the public religion heard, in a full assembly, the public religion controverted and condemned without being angry.

Paul at Corinth and Ephesus.

On leaving Athens, our apostle directed his course to Corinth, a place as famous for wealth, commerce, and arts, as infamous for profligacy. This city is supposed to have derived its name from Corinthus, the son of Pelops, was built on the isthmus which joins the Morea to the Continent, and had an advantageous command of the Ionian and Ægean seas. The characteristic elegance of its buildings gave rise to the Corinthian

order in architecture. Among other public edifices, was a temple to Venus Popularis, who was worshipped with rites harmonious with her character. Commerce brought affluence, affluence luxury, and luxury dissolute manners. Between the intolerance of the Jews, and the libertinism of the Greeks, our apostle met with much to try his patience and fortitude, but he persevered and was successful. Corinth lost its independence about one hundred and forty-six years before the Christian era, when it was taken and pillaged by the Romans, under the consul Mummius. Happily for Paul, Corinth was in his time the residence of the pro-consul of Achaia, which included that division of Greece which lay between Thessaly and the southern coasts of the Morea.

And when Gallio was deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection against Paul with one accord, and brought him to the judgment-seat, saying—This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.*

Paul was brought before the magistrate with much tumult and hurry, as though some atrocious villain who had outraged all laws human and divine, and who had been long pursued, and was now happily taken. What must have been the surprise of Gallio, to find that the allegations of his violent accusers amounted to no more than that he *persuaded* men to worship God contrary

* Acts, xviii. 12.

to the law! The Romans allowed the Jews to worship God, even out of their country, according to their law; with this liberty, the apostle did not interfere either by force or fraud, but endeavoured to satisfy them, by reasoning and persuasion, that the God of their fathers had now put a period to the ritual institutes of Moses, and introduced a simpler and more efficacious economy, and that this evangelical economy was the completion and perfection of the legal one. The Jews were not able to meet him on his own ground of reasoning and persuasion, were afraid to assail him with violence, and therefore brought him to the magistrate.

The conduct of Gallio on this occasion was such as entitles his name and memory not to obloquy, but to gratitude and respect. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names (as whether Jesus should be called the Messiah) and of your law (whether all who worship God should be circumcised according to the law of Moses) look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. It seems that Gallio listened attentively to what the plaintiffs had to say, but finding that the matter was wholly of a religious nature, and that the defendant was not accused of disturbing the peace, or breaking any of the laws of which he was the guardian, he would

not allow the latter to answer for himself as a criminal, and authoritatively dismissed the former.— If all persons had thought as rationally on the bounds of civil jurisdiction as this Roman proconsul seems to have done, *Defensor Fidei* would not be added to the titles of magistrates. In the estimation of Gallio, it was disorderly and irrational to bring a controversy on religion into a court of justice.

“ The prudence and moderation of Gallio,” says Doddridge, “ are truly amiable: that wise Roman well knew the extent of his office as a magistrate, and was aware, that it gave him no title, no pretence, to dictate in matters of conscience, or to restrain men’s religious liberties, so long as they abstained from injustice and mischievous licentiousness.” This Gallio was the eldest brother of Seneca, the stoic philosopher, and uncle to Lucan, the poet; his first name was Novatus, but on being adopted into the family of Gallio, he took the name of his foster-father. He is described as a man of good sense, great wit, and strict integrity: on account of the benignity of his temper, and the suavity of his manners, he was called *Dulcis Gallio*. This excellent magistrate, with his two brothers, Mela, the father of Lucan, and Seneca, the tutor of Nero, were put to death by that emperor, who, in the paroxysm of his despotic wickedness, took pleasure in destroying whatever was great and good.*

* Taciti Annal. lib. 15, 70. Ibid. 16, 17.

Gallio has been blamed for not protecting Sosthenes, or punishing those who assaulted him.— It is not agreed by commentators and critics, who Sosthenes was, nor yet who were the Greeks that beat him. As he was the chief ruler of the synagogue, it is not unlikely that he had taken an active part in the insidious and intolerant prosecution of Paul, and that Gallio, when informed of his being beaten by the Greeks, thought that he merited the chastisement he had received, and therefore would not interfere.

From Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, our apostle sailed to Ephesus, where he met with an encouraging reception. As he had purposed to visit the church at Jerusalem, he made no stay, though solicited, at Ephesus; but having promised to return, proceeded on his voyage to Cæsarea, and having saluted the mother church at Jerusalem, he went down to Antioch, in Syria, and taking a compass thence, through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples, returned to Ephesus. In this large and populous city, the capital of Asia Minor, the apostle dwelt more than two years, and performed more arduous and successful services than in any other place. Ancient Ephesus stood about fifty miles south of Smyrna, on the shore of the Icarian sea, and near the mouth of the river Cayster. It underwent many revolutions, and was in the meridian of its glory when visited by the apostle Paul.

At this time, Ephesus abounded with philoso-

phers and men of business, and was the resort of persons of distinction, connected with the government. It is said that the public buildings of Éphesus were superb : two of them are mentioned in the Acts, the theatre and the temple of Diana ; the former of which was spacious, and the latter, for its extent and splendour, was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. This stupendous monument of ancient art and superstition, was built at the expense of all Asia Minor, was four hundred and twenty-five feet in length, two hundred and twenty in breadth, and was supported and beautified by one hundred and twenty-seven columns of marble, seventy feet high, twenty-seven of which were curiously carved, and the rest polished. The altar was the work of Praxiteles, one of the most celebrated sculptors of antiquity. Dinocrates, who built Alexandria in Egypt, and offered to shape Mount Athos in Macedon into a statue of Alexander, whose left hand should contain a walled city, and from whose right hand the rivers of the mountain should flow into the sea, was the architect. The Goddess, to whom this noble structure was sacred, was not Diana the huntress ; or, if she were, her votaries at Ephesus made large additions to her attributes.

The epithet *great*, given with such emphasis to the Ephesian Diana, seems to assert her pre-eminent dignity. The *chaste* Diana is generally represented in a hunting dress, with a quiver, a parcel of dogs, and a train of virgins ; but the Ephe-

sian Diana appears with many breasts, with a crown of turrets, with festoons of flowers and fruits, with figures of lions, oxen, stags, tritons, and griffins, and with other devices, symbolical of nature in her several departments and operations. The titles and honours given to the Ephesian goddess, added to the number of her worshippers and the importance attached to her service, prove that she was no local or partial divinity, but rather an assemblage of gods and goddesses: otherwise her greatness, and the pomp of her service, threw all the other gods of the pagan world into the back ground. Another circumstance which merits attention is, that Ephesus was so famous for magic, that certain forms of incantation were thence denominated Ephesian Letters.

The principles disseminated by Paul coming in contact with the black arts and reigning idolatry of Ephesus, could not but produce an effervescence and explosion.

It was a general rule with the apostles, in executing their great commission, to offer the gospel first to their countrymen the Jews. Paul, accordingly, went into the synagogue at Ephesus, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading things concerning the kingdom of God. But when the Jews understood that the gospel tended to the subversion of their law, they publicly reviled it, which induced the apostle to separate the disciples, and to preach and dispute in the school of one Tyrannus, which

he did for the space of two years. The divine power confirmed the doctrine of the apostle with special miracles, so that the healthy and the infirm flocked to him in great numbers, some to be healed, some to be taught, and some to satisfy their curiosity, insomuch, that all who dwelt in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The surprising miracles of Paul, performed in the name of Jesus, tempted certain wandering Jews, who had abandoned themselves to idleness and sorcery, to make use of that venerable name as a charm for ejecting malignant spirits. But they were sorely chastised for their presumption, and fear fell on all who dwelt at Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified; and many believed and confessed the impositions they had practised; and many, who used magical arts, brought their books of astrology and divination and burned them publicly.

This signal triumph of truth over ignorance and superstition, by rousing the passions of the interested devotees of the established religion, exposed the apostle and his companions to imminent peril, and it is probable it was at this time, in some popular tumult not mentioned by Luke, that he was forced into the theatre, and compelled, after the manner of men, after the barbarous customs of those times, to fight with wild beasts.

There was at Ephesus, a numerous company of

silversmiths, who acquired wealth by making models, in miniature, of the stately fane of Diana, and of the image which was vulgarly reported to have fallen from Jupiter. Demetrius assembled the artificers, and accused Paul of teaching the dangerous heresy, "that they be no gods which are made with hands:" and addressed himself with such earnestness to their love of money, and their zeal for religion, that they were filled with wrath, and shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The uproar which ensued was extremely confused and violent, and it is difficult to say when the anarchy would have ended, but for the seasonable and spirited interposition of the town-clerk. This officer, who was, probably, the secretary and representative of the pro-consul, was well qualified for his station; his presence commanded respect, and his words allayed the swelling rage of the rabble. Virgil compares Neptune calming the convulsed ocean, to a man distinguished by piety and worth, appeasing an incensed and seditious multitude:

Ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet.

It is a scene which displays to the life the value of a good magistrate, and the importance of civil government.

The town-clerk having obtained order and silence, reminded the Ephesians, that there was no need of a public declaration of their ardent zeal in the service of Diana: that it was a fact too well known to be disputed; and that, therefore, they

should be quiet, and do nothing rashly :—that the men they had seized were not guilty of spoiling sacred places, nor yet of reviling their goddess : that if Demetrius and his party had any complaint against them, the law was open ; and that they themselves were liable to be called to account for the needless uproar which they had already created. With this sensible and appropriate speech he dismissed the assembly, and restored the peace.

The conduct of the Asiarchs,* or chiefs of Asia, who interested themselves in Paul's personal safety during the riot, ought to be mentioned, as an instance of honourable liberality.†

* On the office and quality of these ancient ministers of Polytheism, see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. II. p. 348.

† "I think," says Archdeacon Paley, "it does not appear, that our apostle was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances ; in both which the persons who began the assault were immediately interested in his expulsion from the place. The first at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness, (Acts, xvi. 19.) the second at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius, who made silver shrines for Diana."—*Horæ Paulinæ*, 184. Dub. Ed.

Paul violently assaulted in the Temple at Jerusalem, and rescued by Lysias, the Roman tribune. Acts, XXI.

Our apostle went up to Jerusalem with a strong presentiment of the rough treatment he should receive from his countrymen : at Tyre and Cesarea he received prophetic intimations of the perils which awaited him, but no aspect of danger could daunt his courage, or divert him from the path of duty.

The paragraph which describes the occurrences which took place between Paul and the church at Jerusalem is attended with some difficulty. It seems that the apostle knew that his insidious countrymen had endeavoured to raise him up enemies even among his friends, and, therefore, having saluted the elders of the church, he narrated to them particularly the success which had attended his ministry among the Gentiles, not through a fondness for talking of himself, but to obviate prejudice. When the elders, who, no doubt, were men of piety and benevolence, heard of so many idolaters reclaimed from the errors of gentilism, they gave thanks to God ; but, at the same time, made haste to show their anxiety on another subject. Thou seest, brother, said they, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law : and,

they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. The conduct of Paul, with respect to the Mosaic ritual, appears somewhat ambiguous; he circumcised Timothy, and assured the Galatians, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing.* One great principle of the apostle's theology is, that men cannot be justified before God, by the observance of any law whatever, whether moral or ceremonial, human or divine. When circumcision, or any other ordinance of Judaism, was urged as necessary to salvation, he strenuously opposed it; but when inculcated as a part of the municipal law of Israel, as a matter of indifference or of expediency, the case was materially altered.

It does not appear, that Paul had as yet taught the Jews, either in Palestine or out of it, to abandon the institutes of Moses, but he had taught the Gentiles a way of salvation, which did not require them to become Jews, and this was no small offence to the bigots of that nation. As the old covenant was introductory to the new, there was no need of its being formally and suddenly annulled; it was enough for it to be superseded by the gradual developement of a more perfect dispensation. Moreover, the memorable destruction of Jerusa-

* Acts, xvi.—Gal. 5.

lem, with the dissolution of the Jewish polity, and the dispersion of the miserable remnant of that nation, added a loud *Amen* to the new constitution.*

It is probable, that the elders of the church at Jerusalem were enlightened and liberal men, and that the pledge which they required, of Paul's walking orderly, and keeping the law, was for the satisfaction of the less informed: the pledge required was, that Paul should publicly join and assist certain Nazarites in the discharge of their vow, which he accordingly did. While Paul was in the temple, conforming to the laws of his nation, some Jews from Asia, who, like so many evil genii, pursued him, saw him, and regardless of the sanctity of the place, vented their malicious zeal in seditious clamours, and in acts of violence; for they laid hands on him, and cried out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law,

* The law of Moses is abolished, not by any actual repeal of it, but by ceasing to be the law of the kingdom of God.—This way of abolishing the law, did not make its observances unlawful to those who, before their conversion to the gospel, were circumcised; they were indifferent things, which the converted Jews might, or might not observe, as they found convenient.—Locke on Eph. 2. 15.—Most men have a natural and just aversion to disguise and affectation in religion. Our apostle was a determined adversary to both; but when truth was not at stake, he pleased all men, in all things. 1 Cor. x. 33.—To sacrifice truth to complaisance was, in his opinion, to renounce the service of Christ:—"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—Gal. i. 10.

and this place : and farther, brought Greeks into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. Strangers were allowed to worship in the court of the Gentiles, but inscriptions in Greek and Latin on the pillars warned them not to venture farther : to do so was capital. It was very unlikely, that Paul would expose his own life and that of Trophimus, his Ephesian friend, by taking him within the sacred inclosure ; but by this assassinating slander, the zealots designed to cover their outrage by the specious veil of zeal for God and religion.

This was an appeal to the public spirit of Jerusalem not to be resisted ; the whole city was moved, and a tumultuous concourse pressed upon Paul, and dragging him out of the temple, shut the doors ; and while they were beating him, apparently with the design of killing him, Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison, being informed of the tumult, quickly interposed, and rescued Paul from their deadly violence. When the magistrate demanded what the prisoner had done, some cried one thing, some another ; and as the truth could not be ascertained, he was bound and carried to the Castle of Antonia,* from the steps of which he obtained permission to address the confused and enraged multitude who followed

* Josephus describes this as a stately and splendid edifice, resembling a palace, and fitted at once for service and ornament. It was strengthened with four towers, at equal distances, one of which

him, and clamoured for his blood. The fury of the Jews, on this occasion, resembled that of the winds and waves, when they combine to mingle earth and sky, but Paul's composure and presence of mind, enabled him to meet the calls of his arduous duty, in scenes of appalling turbulence and faction: he respectfully addressed his countrymen, adverted to his parentage and education, his extreme devotedness to the religion of his ancestors, his intolerant hatred to the christian name and worship, the singular circumstances of his conversion, and his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

When the speaker came to this part of his speech, the selfish bigotry of the multitude broke forth in shouts of—Away with such a fellow from the earth! These exclamations were accompanied with suitable gestures; for as they cried, they cast off their clothes, and threw dust in the air—popular expressions of their savage ill-will to Paul, of their horror at his impiety, and of their readiness to stone him. As Paul spoke in Hebrew, the Roman tribune did not understand his defence, but from seeing his countrymen convulsed with frantic rage, supposed him guilty of some enor-

commanded a view of the temple. From the junction of the galleries, there were upon the right and left two pair of stairs, by which the soldiers passed to the temple, where they were posted as guards on public festivals, to prevent or suppress sedition. The proximity of the castle and the temple gave facilities to the honourable vigilance of Claudius Lysias.—Jewish Wars, Book VI. chap. 6.

mous crime, and as no specific accusation lay against him, commanded him to be put to the torture, to extort a confession of his guilt. While the soldiers were preparing to execute this harsh and precipitate order, the apostle asked the centurion, if it was lawful to scourge a Roman citizen uncondemned? The centurion made haste to inform his superior of the rank of Paul, and the tribune was somewhat alarmed to find that he had already, though unknowingly, violated the privileges of a Roman citizen. The Porcian and Sempronian laws attached heavy penalties to any infringement on the privileges of citizens,* but though the apostle calmly pleaded his rights for the protection of his person, he was not troubled with a vindictive spirit, and therefore, did not call the tribune to any account for having bound him.

As the tribune understood that the prisoner, though a Jew by birth, was a Roman in rank, he became more anxious to know certainly what his crime was; and as he judged it to be some innovation on the established religion, he, on the morrow, assembled the chief-priests and elders, and set Paul before them. The prisoner surveyed the

* Hence Tully exclaims:—O nomen dulce libertatis! O jus eximium nostrae civitatis! O lex Porcia, legesque Semproniae!—Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari. *Oratio pro Verr*: Such was once the majesty of the Roman name that pirates and savages respected it, insomuch that Roman citizens, in foreign lands, when divested of wealth, power, and liberty, found in their political dignity a shield from violence.

numerous and venerable assembly which sat in judgment on him with composure and penetration, and began his defence with a bold declaration of that general and conscious rectitude which had governed his conduct—that in dissenting in some measure from the established religion of his country, he had not, to the best of his knowledge, symbolized with imposture, but had endeavoured to approve himself to the searcher of hearts. This frank declaration of his integrity displeased the high-priest, who immediately ordered those who stood by the prisoners to smite him on the mouth. Whether Paul was smitten at this time or not, we do not know; perhaps the officers of the Sanhedrin had more humanity than the judge.

After some little interruption, he proceeded in his defence, and perceiving that the council was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, exclaimed, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, of the hope of the resurrection, I am called in question. This well-timed declaration of his sentiments, on a topic which divided his judges, was of the utmost consequence to the apostle: there was little prospect of his obtaining justice; but by insinuating, that he was persecuted for maintaining a doctrine which was strenuously denied by the Sadducees, and as strenuously asserted by the Pharisees, he interested the latter in his favour. So vehement and tumultuous was the dissention which this controverted dogma occasioned, that the tribune, anxious for the preservation of Paul, sent a de-

tachment of soldiers to take him by force out of the council, and bring him to the castle.

On the following day, a band of assassins, to the number of forty, leagued together and bound themselves under a solemn curse, not to eat or drink till they had killed Paul. These murderous zealots were not afraid or ashamed to apprise the chief priests and elders of their desperate design, and to request *their* concurrence. Fortunately, Paul's nephew obtained a knowledge of this conspiracy, and instantly acquainted his uncle with it,* who called for one of the centurions of the garrison, and requested him to introduce the young man to the tribune, as he had something to say to him. This distinguished officer received the youth, who, it is likely, was bashful and diffident, not with the petty insolence of an upstart, but with the obliging condescension of a great man; and, having received his information, cautioned him to let no one know of the part he had acted, and dismissed him.

Lysias, at once prudent and humane, took measures, without delay, to defeat the odious plot which was disclosed to him, and to protect the prisoner, by sending him directly under a powerful military escort to Cæsarea, with a letter to his excellency the governor Felix.

* Paul was a state-prisoner—if his friends had been forbidden access to him, it is probable his life would have been sacrificed to the insidious malice of his enemies.

Paul before Antonius Felix and Porcius Festus.

Cæsarea was a famous sea port town, on the coast of Phenice, formerly called Straton's Tower. Before the time of Herod the great, the harbour was much exposed, but that prince, whose vanity and gratitude prompted him to do some good deeds, ran out into the sea a mole, in the form of a crescent, of prodigious strength, by which it was protected from the war of elements, and rendered a secure station for ships. Herod, to gratify his passion for magnificence, and to express the sense of obligation he had to Cæsar, by whose favour he held his throne, built a splendid city adjoining the port, the palaces and private houses of which were all of fine marble, and called it Cæsarea. On an eminence, in the midst of this elegant city, the complaisant and idolatrous monarch of the Jews raised a temple to Augustus, which was so lofty, that it served as a beacon to direct seamen.* After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, this rising emporium became the capital of all Judea. A theatre, amphitheatre, and prætorium, added additional splendour to Cæsarea, and completed its facilities for pleasure, superstition, and business; three powerful attractives, which would soon furnish it with inhabitants.

* Josephus. Antiquities, Book XV. Chap. xiii.

In the last of these buildings, Paul was lodged till such times as his accusers should appear against him. The rabid inspiration of intolerance quickened the pace of the chief priest and elders in the pursuit of Paul. Five days after he was taken in Jerusalem, they appeared against him in Cæsarea, attended by one Turtullus, a Roman orator, who seems to have imbibed or assumed the principles and spirit of the degenerate Jews.

Though the speech of Turtullus is short, it contains a good deal of falsehood and flattery. The venal barrister applauds the government of Felix, who, according to Jewish and Roman historians, was a base man and a bad Governor. Tacitus says, that he exercised the power of a king, with the disposition of a slave, in acts of cruelty and lechery.*

Josephus says,† that when Felix was removed from his office, the Jews of Cæsarea accused him before Nero, and would have crushed him to death for his injustice and violence, if his brother Pallas, who was then in favour with the Emperor, had not obtained his pardon.

From this panegyric on Felix, the orator proceeds to calumniate Paul, whom he designates a pest—a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

* Antonius Felix, per omnem sævitiam, ac libidinem, jus regium servili ingenio, exercuit.—Hist. v. 9.

† Antiquities, Book XX. chap. 7.

Though the Jews had some time since lost the judicial power of life and death, yet they were allowed by the Romans to execute summary vengeance on any one who presumed to contaminate their temple. This being a capital crime, it would have been a great omission not to charge it on Paul; and the orator, by the artful way in which he states this circumstance, tacitly demands a tribute of praise for Jewish clemency, which extended the forms of law to a wretch who might have been instantly dispatched. But where was the proof of this impious outrage?

Paul, the prisoner, walked the streets of Jerusalem in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian. *Ergo* (in the logic of intolerance), he took Trophimus into the temple, which was the thing to be demonstrated. In the chicanery of Tertullus, the beating which the Jews were giving Paul when Lysias interposed, was nothing more than a process of law and justice, and the military tribune was in no small degree criminal, for appearing so unseasonably with an armed force, and interrupting the proceedings of the Court.

The Jews seconded the harangue of their advocate, by affirming that things were even so.

Paul being called upon for his defence, answered the more cheerfully for himself before Felix, inasmuch as he had been for many years a judge of the Jewish nation, and was well acquainted with its characteristic foibles and prejudices. To repel the charge of sedition, the apostle informed

the governor, that only twelve days had elapsed since he went up to Jerusalem, not to create factions, but to worship, and to bring alms and offerings to his nation. The time he had spent in the metropolis was not sufficient for concerting, and putting into action a scheme of rebellion, even admitting that such had been his object.

The second crime charged against Paul was sectarianism. The counsel for the prosecution roundly affirmed, that the prisoner was a nuisance to society. This general allegation he endeavoured to support by three distinct charges : first, that he was a seditious agitator ; secondly, that he was an apostate from the religion of his ancestors ; and, thirdly, that he was a polluter of sacred places.

Our translators have concealed from the eye of the English reader the appositeness of the apostle's defence, by rendering the same word *sect* in the speech of Tertullus, and *heresy* in the reply of Paul.

Moreover, to one who understands the word *heresy* in its modern acceptation, as denoting a heterodox opinion, Paul's vindication of himself must appear not only irrelative to his accusation, but also absurd. For how was Felix, an immoral heathen, a judge of the heterodox or orthodox opinions embraced or rejected by the Jews ? The word *heresy* is often used in the New Testament to signify *party*, or *sect*, without any intention of conveying obloquy, or praise ; as, for instance,

the sect of the Pharisees, the sect of the Sadducees.

Did the Jews then attempt to criminate Paul by charging him with what they allowed to be innocent? "Let it be remembered," says an acute critic, "first, that since the Jews had fallen under the power of the Romans, their ancient national religion had not only received the sanction of the civil powers, for the continuance of its establishment in Judea, but had obtained a toleration in other parts of the empire; secondly, that Paul is now pleading before a Roman governor, a pagan, who could not well be supposed to know much of the Jewish doctrine, worship, or controversies; and that he had been arraigned by the rulers of his own nation, as belonging to a turbulent and upstart sect: for in this way they considered the Christians, whom they reproachfully named Nazarenes.

The natural consequence of this charge, with one who understood so little of their affairs as Felix, was to make him look on the prisoner as an apostate from Judaism, and therefore, as not entitled to be protected, or even tolerated on the score of his religion. Against a danger of this kind, it was of the utmost consequence to our apostle to defend himself.

Accordingly, when he enters on this part of the charge, how solicitous is he to prove, that his belonging to that *sect*, did not imply any defection from the religion of his ancestors; and thus

to prevent any mistaken judgment on the article of his arraignment, into which a heathen judge must have otherwise unavoidably fallen. His own words will, to the attentive, supersede all argument or illustration: But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call a sect, so worship I; whom? No new divinity, but on the contrary, the God of our fathers. He added, in order the more effectually to remove every suspicion of apostacy, Believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets; and have the same hope towards God, which they themselves also entertain, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.—Thus the apostle, with great address, refutes the charge of having revolted from the religious institution of Moses, and at the same time, is so far from disclaiming, that he glories in the name of a follower of Christ.*

With regard to the third article in the deposition, Paul acknowledged that he was in the temple, but in circumstances which evinced his respect rather than his contempt for that sacred place; he averred, that in the temple he appeared purified according to the obligation of a vow he had made; with composure and reverence, and not with a multitude or a tumult, and challenged his accusers to prove the contrary.

Then Felix deferred them, and said, Having

* Campbell's Dissertations, Vol. II. 8vo. Edition, 117—119.

obtained more exact knowledge of that religion, when Lysias the commander shall come down, I will determine your matter.*—It is probable that Paul would have been released, but the governor wished to ingratiate himself with the Jews, who would have been greatly offended at that act of justice; he was also in expectation that Paul, or his friends would purchase his liberty and therefore remanded him to a gentle confinement, with orders to the centurion, to forbid none of his christian brethren to visit him in person, or otherwise contribute to his comfort.

During the two years which Paul spent in prison at Cæsarea, he was often called for by the governor; once in particular, after a short absence, Felix returned with his wife Drusilla, and heard Paul concerning the faith in Christ. It was on this memorable occasion, that the apostle, adapting his discourse to his hearers, reasoned with such seriousness and energy on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, that Felix trembled and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.

Drusilla was sister to Herod Agrippa, and wife of Azizus king of the Emesenes, who for her sake submitted to circumcision. She was reputed the finest woman of her age, and Felix, smitten with the charms of her person, employed one

* Improved Version. The original is not perfectly clear, and the common version is perplexed.

Simon, a Jew of Cyprus, reputed for his skill in magic, to inveigle her from her husband. Josephus says, that she renounced her religion as well as her husband, to marry Felix, and that she perished by an eruption of Vesuvius.* Though as incontinent as Felix, it does not appear that *she* trembled.

The last verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Acts, introduces a new governor, Porcius Festus, who was sent to supersede Felix. This change took place, according to the chronology of Doddridge and Echard, early in the sixtieth year of our æra, and in the sixth of Nero's reign.

After three days' residence at Cæsarea, Festus went up to Jerusalem, probably to gratify his curiosity by seeing that renowned city, and to acquaint himself with the character and circumstances of his new subjects. The intolerant ardour of the Jews, had not yet spent itself; they informed the new procurator against Paul, and importuned, as a favour, that he would send for the prisoner to Jerusalem, intending to dispatch him by a posse of assassins. It is hard to imagine that Festus could suppose the Jews capable of the outrage they had projected, and if he did not, it is still more hard to say why he should refuse a request so seemingly reasonable. By laws which elude our sight, mysterious Providence rules the world; and at one time preserves the life of man amidst thickening and impending perils; and at

* Antiquities, xxii. 5.

another, cuts it short amidst scenes of deceitful ease and security.

Having spent about ten days in Jerusalem, the governor returned to Cæsarea, whither he was attended by some of the leading Jews, whose business and pleasure it was to support and invigorate the prosecution against Paul.

From Jerusalem to Cæsarea was about seventy English miles. On the day after their arrival, Festus sat on the tribunal, and commanded Paul to be brought, when the plaintiffs as usual brought many heavy charges against him, but could not prove them.

The historian has preserved only an abstract of this trial; but from his compendium of Paul's defence, it appears, that the main accusations were nothing more than a reiteration of those already mentioned, viz. defection from the law, profanation of the temple, and contempt of the civil magistracy. As a piece of complaisance gratifying to the Jews, Festus asked Paul if he would go up to Jerusalem, and be judged there before him? Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged;—I appeal to Cæsar. These decisive words gave rise to that series of events with which the apostolical history terminates. In standing as a culprit before Festus, the representative of imperial majesty, the apostle considered himself as standing at Cæsar's tribunal. The appeal to Cæsar in *person*, was obviously conditional; otherwise there could be no room for Festus to deliberate with his

council, inasmuch as it was not in his power to refuse the appeal.

The matter seems to have been thus : Paul required either that his case should be decided by Festus there, in the secular court, or that he should be sent to Rome, to be heard by the emperor in person. Festus having conferred with his council, and being apprised that by liberating the prisoner he should sin against the illiberal prejudices and vindictive passions of the Jews ; and by detaining him, against the paramount rights of a Roman citizen, either of which might be attended with the utmost danger, he addressed the prisoner ; Thou hast appealed to Cæsar, unto Cæsar thou shalt go. Here is a son of Abraham obliged to seek justice and protection from Nero. So David, to escape the watchful resentment of Saul, took refuge in the land of the Philistines. At Rome, the apostle while in bonds, spent two whole years in his own house, preaching the kingdom of God with all boldness, prohibited by no man ; he could not do this at Jerusalem. This unreasonable hostility was less excusable in the Jews than it would have been in idolators ; because the gospel struck at the very foundations of idolatry, by treating its gods as non-entities. The apostle strongly affirms the absurdity of all religious sympathies between pagans and christians, when he asks, What concord hath Christ with Belial ; or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, and what agreement hath the tem-

ple of God with idols? * How irritating must it have been to a zealous pagan to see the gods he adored with so much pomp and expense, treated as impious fictions? On the contrary, the God of Israel, whose awful being and perfections were the basis of the law of Moses, was exclusively acknowledged and magnified by the gospel of Christ, as the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. † The harmony of the new dispensation with the old, in this cardinal point, ought at least to have softened down the asperities of prejudice, and to have obtained a calm investigation of its merits. The reader knows how far this was from being the case.

It is a common saying, and like most of our proverbs, has, I suppose, some truth in it, that "love begets love." The love of the apostle to his countrymen was unaffected, ardent, and active; but it elicited from their hearts no corresponding affection; on the contrary, the more he loved, the more he was hated. Paul's conversion, far from dissolving his natural affinities, made him feel them the more acutely; he was still a Hebrew of the Hebrews and painfully alive to the interests of his country.

The singular institutions of the Jews insulated them, and supplied new reasons for their cultivating that attachment which members of the same family generally feel towards each other. But

* 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16.

† 1 Tim. i. 17.

what tie is there that bigotry will not burst asunder?

No people could be under more solemn obligations to administer justice and to shun the effusion of innocent blood, than they who received, and bound themselves to obey, the law of Moses.

Again, the Apostle having been trained up in the school of Gamaliel, had familiarized his mind with the laws and institutions of his ancestors,—a branch of knowledge which must have been of the utmost service to him in defending himself before the Sanhedrim. Here is a prisoner of high character and attainments, neither wishing to elude justice nor obtain mercy, deterred by substantial reasons, from appealing to the supreme tribunal of his country; he is obliged to seek from strangers that equity which was refused him by his brethren. What a picture of the perverting operation of intolerant zealotism, do the proceedings of the Jews against Paul present! We look in vain for any traces of the ingenuous rectitude of a wise and virtuous people.

How melancholy that a nation favoured with the special revelations of heaven, should be less capable or less disposed to protect the common rights of men than pagans abandoned to the light of nature and to the wild vagaries of polytheism! Well might the precursor of the Messiah, warn the degenerate Jews, Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.

If any accuse me of impiety, for finding fault

with the chosen people, I must beg leave to except against the charge. To suppose that there was any radical difference between the issue of Abraham and other people, is at once against reason and scripture. As the Israelites were not chosen because they were better than others, so neither did the new relation into which they were taken, require or involve any miraculous transformation of moral character. When they are called a holy nation, we are not taught their moral qualities, but their peculiar circumstances as a people separated from idolaters by divine discoveries, rites, and laws. Admitting the divine dispensation to the Jews, does not oblige us to approve and admire indiscriminately all the actions of that people. The prophets and apostles describe the wickedness of the elect nation, without palliating or disguising it; and we must allow that its guilt was great in the estimate of the righteous judge, or otherwise, that its punishment was disproportionate.

Agrippa was the only Jewish ruler who acted with fairness and candour towards Paul. Festus having resolved to send the prisoner to the hearing of the Emperor, rather than expose himself to danger, by administering or perverting justice, took the opportunity of a visit from Agrippa, to lay before him this critical case, and take his opinion on it. It seemed to Festus unreasonable to send a man to the imperial tribunal, and not to signify at the same time, the crimes alleged against

him; and therefore he wished to know if King Agrippa could find wherein the prisoner's guilt consisted.

The Apostle answered the more cheerfully before Felix, because he had been for many years a judge of his nation; and thought himself happy to make his defence before Agrippa, because *he* was expert in all customs and questions which were among the Jews. Agrippa being acquainted with the Scriptures, was a competent judge of the religious bearings of the prisoner's principles and conduct, and therefore he adopted a mode of defence somewhat different from that which he employed before the heathen magistrates.

One main point to which the apostle seems to have directed his discourse, was to prove that what Moses prophesied, he preached, and that he was no runagate and ought not to be outlawed. Festus thought the prisoner mad, but Agrippa, who was familiar both with the facts and prophecies to which he had referred, was *almost* persuaded to be a christian. Remote from impatience under his sufferings, and from resentment to those who inflicted them, in a high strain of benevolence and zeal, the prisoner expressed his ardent desire that not only the king, but all who heard him that day, were almost and altogether such as he was, his bonds excepted. On this, the assembly broke up, and the judges having conferred with each other, agreed that the prisoner had done nothing worthy of death or bonds;

and the king gave it as his opinion, that he might have been liberated, if he had not appealed to Cæsar. Our apostle, with other prisoners, was committed to the custody of one Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band, and transported from Cæsarea to Puteoli, a voyage checquered with much variety of peril. The interesting particulars of this voyage, are too many to be mentioned. At Puteoli, Paul and his companions were allowed to spend a week with the christian brethren in that place. For this indulgence, with many others which mitigated the severity of their sufferings, they were indebted to the kindness and courtesy of Julius. From Puteoli to Rome is about a hundred miles, in journeying to which, the apostle passed through, or near Appii Forum, and Tres Tabernæ or the Three Taverns, where he was met by christian friends from the city.

We have now attended this distinguished teacher of religion and morals, through the vicissitudes of many years, and we are called upon to take a reluctant farewell of him in the metropolis of the civilized world. From what causes does not appear, whether the remissness of the Emperor, engrossed with pleasure, or of the Jews overcome by despair, but Paul was doomed to spend two years in confinement at Rome. The high and enlightened spirit of Roman jurisprudence, however, appears in the prisoner's circumstances: he was not thrown into a dungeon, and forbid to see or be seen, but was allowed to dwell in his

own house, under the custody of a soldier, and to receive all who came to him, and to preach the kingdom of God, and to teach the things which concern the Lord Jesus with all confidence, no man forbidding him. Years of persecution had not conquered our apostle's love to his countrymen; after three days, he sent for the chief of them who were in Rome, and gave them a brief exposition of his case, which he concluded with observing, that for the hope of Israel, he was bound with that chain. The Jews professed, that they had received no letters concerning him from Judea, and that none of the brethren who had visited them, had spoken any harm of him. It is probable that the Jews of Palestine were afraid to disclose their intolerance at Rome by appearing against Paul, and that this was the true reason of his long imprisonment there; for it was not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man, without confronting him with his accusers.

The Jews requested one favour of the apostle, viz: To give his opinion concerning the new sect to which he belonged, in as much as it was every where spoken against.

It is said that the zealots of Judea sent out missionaries to all parts, to let the world know that the christians were an atheistical and wicked sect, and ought to be detested and abhorred by all mankind. This may account for the abusive names given by writers, ignorant of the christians to them and their religion. The Jews of Rome

were, no doubt, more enlightened and liberal than their brethren who had not travelled beyond the boundaries of their paternal inheritance. The request was reasonable, and doubtless the apostle was happy to comply with it; and the day being appointed, many came to his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning until evening. Some believed, and some did not; and as they were about to depart in a state of variance, the apostle gave the unbelievers a pointed admonition in the language of a prophecy which foretold their perverseness, their infatuation and abandonment.

Here is presented the awful spectacle of a people mercifully distinguished from others, long favoured with a course of religious and moral culture, and after all given up to wilful blindness, and incorrigible folly. The reprobation of the Jews, and the adoption of the Gentiles, was distinctly anticipated by Moses.* Isaiah too, was very bold to declare the calling of strangers, and the rejection of his countrymen, when he said, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." But concerning Israel, he saith, "I have spread out my hands all the

* Deut. xxxii. 19-21.

day unto a rebellious people which walked in a way that is not good after their own thoughts."* That Christ was preached to the Gentiles, and believed on, in the world, are too articles in the great mystery of godliness. To Paul in particular, was this grace given, that he should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Still, however, it was the uniform practice of the apostle of the Gentiles, while fulfilling his ministry, to make the first overture of the gospel to the Jews: this he did at Rome, and when some proved refractory, and rejected the good tidings, he assured them that the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, and that they would hear it.

But our main object here, is to notice the connection between the sins which the Jews in their intolerant zeal committed, and the punishments which they endured in the day when God avenged the innocent blood which they had shed. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the

* Isiah, lxx, 1, 2. Rom. x. 20, 21.

temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon his generation.*

The Jews persecuted as though they had obtained a patent from the invisible king for doing so: let those who are ambitious to imitate them in this the worst part of their bad conduct, reflect on the judgment which God in his word and his providence has passed on it. The words we have quoted are the commencement of a series of predictions, in which our Lord, with the utmost precision, describes the unparalleled calamities which were about to overwhelm his blood-stained country. The compassionate Saviour was deeply affected at the dreadful prospect, and breaks out in the pathetic apostrophe, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house, (your temple of which ye are so vain,) is left unto you desolate. Josephus, who in the early part of the war fought in defence of his country, and in the latter part of it was a prisoner in the Roman army, has given us a minute account of the scenes he witnessed. His history of the siege and capture of Jerusalem is an ample and satisfactory comment on the twenty-fourth of Matthew.

There were several circumstances attending the downfall and dispersion of the Jewish nation,

* Matthew, xxiii. 34—36.

in which the divine justice became visible. Titus who led the eagles to their prey, was for his clemency, esteemed the delight of mankind. If the war had been carried on under the direction of Tiberius, Caligula, or Nero, we might have attributed its severity and fatal consequences to the savageness of the general. But no imputation of this nature, can lie against the character of Titus; he was anxious to preserve from total ruin, the city he was compelled to invest; and nothing grieved him more than that the besieged put it out of his power to show them mercy.

Our Lord gave his disciples a sign by which they might know when his predictions were about to receive their dire accomplishment,—When ye shall see the abomination which maketh desolate, stand in the holy place,—then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains. As the Romans carried the figures of their gods in their standards, they were to the Jews an abomination.*

* “The word *abomination*, in sacred style, signifies idol: and is it not generally known, that the Roman armies bore in their ensigns, the images of their gods, and of their Cæsars, who were more revered than all their gods together. The ensigns were to the soldiers, an object of worship; and because idols, according to the commands of God, were never to appear in the Holy Land, the Roman ensigns were banished from it. And therefore we find in history, that so long as the Romans retained any degree of regard for the Jews, they never displayed their banners in Judea. It was on this account, that Vitellius, when he passed into that province, in order to carry the war into Arabia, caused his troops to march without ensigns; the Jewish religion was still held in rever-

Being the symbols and incentives of warfare, it is needless to say how they were connected with desolation.

The disciples understood this warning, and when they saw the Holy Land invaded by idolatrous armies, they made their escape to the mountains, where from Pella, they saw the clouds of vengeance burst on their devoted country.

The city was extremely thronged when the siege commenced; probably by the great influx of strangers who came up to the feast of the passover. This circumstance, when the sword, famine, and pestilence began the work of destruction, increased the horrors of the scene.

Then was there great tribulation, the like of which, no nation had suffered; dearth, discord, rapine, murder and contagion, raged within the walls; such was the extremity of wretchedness, that a delicate mother was known to feed on her own child. Nor was this a solitary instance of misery. Blessed indeed, in those days, were the wombs which had not borne, and the paps which had not given suck. Well might

ence, and even the enemies of the Jews would by no means force that people to suffer things contrary to their law. But, in the time of the last Jewish war, we may be persuaded, that the Romans did not spare a people, whom they were resolved to exterminate. Accordingly, when Jerusalem was besieged, it was encompassed with as many idols as there were imperial ensigns; and the *abomination* never appeared so much "where it ought not," that is, in the Holy Land, and round about the temple."

Bossuet's Universal History, 309.

Christ address the mourners that followed him, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children!

Without the city, to say nothing of those who fell by the sword, such numbers were crucified, that the country failed to supply wood. The day of Jerusalem's destruction, was that great and notable day of the Lord, spoken of by the prophet Joel, introduced with signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath, blood and fire, and vapour of smoke. Then did the son of man come a second time, conspicuously as in the clouds of heaven, drest in the robes of vengeance, to avenge the righteous blood, shed by an intolerant generation. The Romans were in general indulgent to the nations they conquered; but the war against the Jews was carried on with unexampled severity, and ended in the total annihilation of their national power and polity. The miserable remains of that people, were banished from the land of their nativity, and sold as slaves to the neighbouring nations: and from that day to this, they have not been able to regain possession of the land which God gave to their ancestors, and which they forfeited by their intolerant bigotry and fanaticism.

We shall conclude this Chapter with a brief outline of the situation of the Jews in reference to the Romans, under the six first Emperors. Though the Jews had suffered greatly from the arms of Pompey and the avarice of Crassus, and still

more from their intestine divisions and civil wars, they were both numerous and powerful when visited by Julius Cæsar. That consummate general treated them with the urbanity and kindness which distinguished his character, and gave efficient proofs of his benevolence, by granting several acts for the establishment of their ancient privileges, and for the fortifying and ornamenting of Jerusalem. It was chiefly by the favour and assistance of Antony, that Herod obtained the government; and after the defeat and death of that general at Actium, the crafty tyrant used all his arts to ingratiate himself with Augustus, and was confirmed in an office, of which he was unworthy. The empire, in the days of Augustus, governed too many nations to govern them well, and it is probable that the Emperor was unacquainted with the atrocities which disgraced the administration of Herod. But supposing that the events which transpired in distant provinces were known to Augustus, critical circumstances obliged him to be cautious how he proceeded even in the distribution of justice: so much noble blood was spilt in the war with Antony, that Augustus had much reason to dread the public resentment, and many motives to render the power he had acquired by such fatal means, as soft and soothing as possible. Hence general connivance; for arms taken up in remote provinces, might be the signal for insurrections at home. Having closed the temple of Janus, it was politic in the Emperor to keep it

closed, and to obliterate the miseries of war by the blessings of peace.

The character of Herod, both public and private, is of the vilest description, and necessarily commands the abhorrence of mankind; and his death was as miserable as his life was vicious. Herod was in profession a Jew, but he practised no religion, except that, (whatever be its name,) of an unfeeling tyrant; and he showed less respect to the religious scruples of his subjects, than the two first Cæsars. To avert the just indignation of his subjects, Herod built the most stately temple that had as yet adorned Jerusalem. The body of this magnificent structure was raised in a short time, but the appendages of grace and ornament were scarcely completed, when its awful doom was pronounced.*

Augustus by his will, declared Tiberius his heir. All the subjects of the empire now began to feel the miseries of that despotism, which their servility, and aversion to justice and order, had brought upon them. Tiberius made his government as oppressive by his wanton cruelties, as he did his person loathsome, by his midnight revels. The courtly Augustus sought to be loved that he might be obeyed, but his suspicious successor was content to be hated so long as he was feared.

Comparing a small tyrant with a great one, Pontius Pilate was but a too just representative

* Matt. xxiv. 2.

of his imperial master. During the ten years in which he governed Judea, he committed many acts of rapine and oppression, took bribes and perverted judgment. The evangelist Luke speaks of certain Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. Supposing that these Galileans were guilty of some flagrant offence, of which we have no evidence, still to kill them in the temple, while engaged in the solemnity of worship, was a very disorderly administration of justice.

If in looking out for a successor, Tiberius sought to find a man, the enormity of whose crimes should exceed his own, he showed much sagacity in the choice of Caligula. Tiberius was heard to say, that "this youth had the faults of Sylla without his virtues; that he was a serpent that would sting the empire; and a Phaeton who would set the world on fire." Caligula, however, artfully concealed the serpentine depravity of his nature in the early part of his reign; rejected a paper which tendered the exposure of a conspiracy against his life, restored some of the beneficial institutions of Augustus, which the tyranny of his predecessor had suspended; reformed abuses in the state, and punished or removed bad governors of provinces. But he soon became weary of restraint and affectation, and proceeded to charge the history of his reign with those extravagancies of folly and wickedness which have given an infamous celebrity to his name. Caligula having surpassed all who preceded him, in the abundance

and eccentricity of his vices, rose to the climax of his impious folly, and demanded divine honours. To prove that he was in earnest, he built a splendid temple, dedicated it to his own divinity, and instituted an order of priests and priestesses to offer sacrifices.

In the third year of Caligula, some Jewish ambassadors from Alexandria the chief of whom was Philo, waited on him to deprecate his vengeance for not worshipping the symbols of his divinity as other nations did. The deputation which appeared against the Jews, alleged, that whereas temples and altars were erected all over the world in honour of the Emperor, and the same adoration paid him as other gods, the Jews alone refused to dedicate images to his divinity, and to swear by his holy name. When Philo was about to apologize for himself and his countrymen, the Emperor abruptly and passionately ordered them to depart; on which Philo observed to his companions, that they ought to be of good courage, assured that God was for them, since the Emperor was against them.*

The tyrant was so enraged at this laudible contumacy of the Jews, that he immediately recalled from the province of Syria, Vitellius, whose tolerant and conciliating conduct had done much towards the preservation of peace, and sent Petronius in his place, with orders to set up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem, and to put to instant

* Josephus,—Antiquities, Book xviii. Chap. 10.

death, any who should dare to make resistance. The Jews were thrown into the wildest amazement and consternation, at the news of this daring attack on their laws and religion, and resolved to give up their lives, rather than suffer their temple to be polluted by such a degrading species of idolatry. Petronius, with two legions, and a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria, marched from Antioch to Ptolemais, where he was met by a prodigious multitude of the Jews, unarmed, with their wives and children, who in strains of the deepest lamentation, and urgent entreaty, besought him not to attempt violating their sacred laws and customs, handed down to them from their forefathers. Petronius, remonstrated with them, and reminded them of their own weakness and of Cæsar's strength; but they were inflexible, and resolved to die, rather than witness the profanation of their temple. Petronius acted with the prudence and moderation of a man fit to be entrusted with power, deferred the execution of his charge, and though he was under obligations to Caligula, and knew his imperious and revengeful temper, undertook to become the advocate of the Jews, and to represent the danger of tampering with their sacred institutions. Herod Agrippa who was then at Rome, and in favour with Caligula, used his interest in behalf of his country; but the best friend to the Jews and to the world, was Cassius Cherea, tribune of the prætorian bands, who stabled the Emperor, and

thereby put an end, at once to his life and his tyranny.

The death of Caligula, happened in the twenty-ninth year of his age, in the fourth of his reign, and in the fortieth of our æra. The Jews had already made considerable progress in persecuting the Christian churches, which were rapidly encreasing in Judea, Galilee and Samaria; but the decree of Caligula, so alarmed the Jews throughout these provinces, that they forgot their quarrel with the Christian churches, which consequently “ had rest, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were edified and multiplied.”* To such a pitch did the anxiety of the nation rise, for the preservation of their sanctuary from the contamination of the Emperor’s image, that they abandoned the pursuits of life, even the tillage of their lands, and resolved to oppose the impious indignity offered not only to themselves, but also to the God of their pious ancestors, to their last breath:—the citadel was attacked; they had no leisure to defend the outworks.

The history of the Jews from this time to the dissolution of their polity, and the extinction of their national independence and glory, is a disorderly scene of fanaticism and brutal violence. In the seventh year of Claudius, while Cumanus was governor of Judea, twenty

* Acts ix. 31.

thousand Jews were slain in a sedition. In the first year of Nero, Felix was made governor of Judea, who, by his corrupt and oppressive conduct, inflamed the jealousies of the Jews, in-somuch that rebels and impostors rose up daily.

In the sixth year of Nero, Felix was superseded by Festus, under whom the affairs of the Jews still proceeded from bad to worse. Albinus found no man guilty who had *money* to make him innocent. Gessius Florus was not ashamed to commit all the acts of injustice without disguise or concealment, which Albinus had committed with some affectation of secrecy. The flagrant misrule of Florus, together with the restless and furious fanaticism of the Jews, brought the intestine broils, which had so long agitated the province, to an open rupture, which was never healed. At Cæsarea, more than twenty thousand Jews were killed in one day by the Syrians, to revenge which, the Jews desolated a considerable part of Syria with fire and sword. At Scythopolis, thirteen thousand Jews were massacred; at Ptolemais, twenty thousand; at Askalon, twenty-five thousand; and at Alexandria, fifty thousand: in a word, all the cities and countries contiguous to the once holy and happy land, presented one general and disgusting scene of carnage and bloodshed. In the thirteenth year of Nero, A. D. 67, Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, conducted the legions under his command, against

Jerusalem, which the Christians considered as the signal for their departure from that devoted city. No bounds could be thenceforth set to the anarchy of the Jews, until it was extinguished in their blood.*

* Josephus,—Wars of the Jews, Book ii.

CHAPTER IV.

From the close of the Acts of the Apostles, to the Establishment of Christianity as the Religion of the Roman Empire.

IN acquiring a knowledge of any branch of history, scarcely any thing is of more consequence, than care and discrimination, as to the authorities on which we depend. The Acts of the Apostles, considered merely as a piece of history, is one of the most valuable fragments which have escaped the ravages of time. The events it records, are nearly all of a public nature,—many are very singular, and are attended with singular circumstances. The Acts was published, before the places in which Paul exercised his ministry and performed miracles, had changed their inhabitants. The truth of christianity, was violently contested, quickly after its promulgation by the Apostles, and if the facts by which it was supported, could have been called in question, its enemies would, no doubt, have availed themselves of such a topic of triumph and exultation.

The information to be derived from the Acts, respecting persons, places, and customs, incidentally introduced, has every appearance of being

correct, and is strongly corroborated by the testimony of profane authors. It is vain, however, to regret that the "beloved physician" did not continue his memoirs further.

We are now come to a period in which the lights of scripture history forsake us, and we are left to grope our way by the assistance of guides whose character obliges us to follow them with caution. On the one hand, the most competent and faithful historians of the empire have done little more than cast a hasty and scornful glance on the christian profession: while on the other, christian writers of the first centuries who were minute in the details of their own sufferings, are suspected, with too much reason, of dealing in rhetoric and fiction. The pagan historians and annalists are to be heard with caution on account of their prejudices; and the christian apologists are to be examined before they are believed, on account of their obvious propensity to magnify their numbers and their sufferings. Who is there that has not heard of the ten general persecutions under the Roman Emperors, and yet it seems that this number was not suggested so much by matter of fact as by a fancied analogy between the plagues of Egypt and the plagues of the Christian church. The prosecution of our work in this period under these circumstances requires rather a talent for criticism than description. If half the crimes generated by intolerance were consigned to oblivion, the remainder would be enough to

brand it with eternal infamy, and therefore its enemies need not impute to it fictitious atrocities.

There has seldom been systematic persecution in any nation, except where there has been a state religion to instigate and prosecute it. The religion of the Romans was recognized by the state, but the recognition was vague as was the religion itself. There must, one would suppose, have been extensive liberty of conscience where there were sixty thousand divinities. But in fact, the religion of the Romans, was not a religion of conscience, nor was uniformity an object.* A hundred

* "The policy of the Emperors and the Senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious part of their subjects. The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted, with implicit faith, the different religions of the earth. Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors.

As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes who had lived, or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed, that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence, of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams, possessed in peace, their local and respective influence; nor could the Roman, who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber, deride the

nations subject to imperial Rome, each worshipping its hereditary gods at pleasure, are ample vouchers of the religious tolerance of their conquerors. When Palestine became a province of the empire, no attempt was made to modify or restrain the religion of the Jews. The Jews were much addicted to traffic, and often went from home; and this they might do with safety, as in every province of the empire, they enjoyed, notwithstanding the singularity of their religion, the protection of the laws. The christians were for some time considered by the Romans as a new Jewish sect. After the dissolution of that nation, the laws which had guaranteed its liberties, fell into neglect. The christians were characterized by zeal and assiduity, and therefore, though modest, they could not long remain unknown. The Romans could very well endure that a foreign God, unknown to them, should be worshipped, but they could not endure that their own divinities should be set at nought. As the christians deemed it impious to worship the deities of the empire, they were charged with atheism. The surviving Jews who were scattered abroad in the several provinces of the empire, were ever ready to swell and propagate a calumny raised against a sect which accused them of rejecting and crucifying their long expected Messiah.

Egyptian, who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile."—*Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Vol. I. 46.*

“ Before we proceed further,” says the learned Mosheim, “ a very natural curiosity calls us to enquire, how it happened that the Romans who were troublesome to no nation, on account of their religion, and who suffered even the Jews to live under their own laws, and follow their own method of worship, treated the christians alone with such severity? This important question seems still more difficult to be solved, when we consider that the excellent nature of the christian religion, and its admirable tendency to promote, both the public welfare of the state, and the private felicity of the individual, entitled it, in a singular manner, to the favour and protection of the reigning powers. One of the principal reasons of the severity with which the Romans persecuted the christians, notwithstanding these considerations, seems to have been the abhorrence and contempt with which the latter regarded the religion of the empire, which was so intimately connected with the form, and indeed, with the very essence of its political constitution. For, though the Romans gave an unlimited toleration to all religions which had nothing in their tenets dangerous to the common-wealth, yet they would not permit that of their ancestors, which was established by the laws of the state, to be turned into derision, nor the people to be drawn away from their attachment to it. These, however, were the two things which the christians were charged with, and that justly, though to their honour. They

dared to ridicule the absurdities of the Pagan superstition, and they were ardent and assiduous in gaining proselytes to the truth. Nor did they only attack the religion of Rome, but also all the different shapes and forms under which superstition appeared in the various countries where they exercised their ministry. From hence, the Romans concluded, that the christian sect was not only unsupportably daring and arrogant, but, moreover, an enemy to the public tranquillity, and every way proper to excite civil wars and commotions in the empire. It is, probably, on this account, that Tacitus reproaches them with the odious character of *haters of mankind*, and styles the religion of Jesus a *destructive superstition*; and that Suetonius speaks of the christians, and their doctrine, in terms of the same kind.*

* A short sketch of the religion of the Romans, may not be uninteresting or irrelevant.

Though the religion of the Romans was a mixture of fiction and allegory, adapted to political purposes, yet it rested mainly on the opinion, that there are powers above, and that these powers interfere with the concerns of mortals. The entrails of beasts, and the motions of birds, furnished an inexhaustible fund of revelations, the ambiguity of which enhanced their value, as it rendered them the more easily convertible to the designs of the aruspices and augurs. Cato the Elder, expresses his surprise, that one augur could meet another without laughing. Numa, to increase his authority as a legislator, gave countenance to the fable which reported that he was familiar with the nymph Egeria. *We look for truth and rationality in religion: they who fabricated the Roman liturgy, were intent on amusement and convenience. Cicero affirms that his*

Another circumstance that irritated the Romans against the christians, was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people. The christians had neither sacrifices, nor temples, nor images, nor oracles, nor sacerdotal orders; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude, who imagined that there could be no religion without these. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of atheists; and by the Roman laws, those who were chargeable with atheism, were declared the pests of society. But this was not all, the sordid interests of a multitude of lazy and selfish priests, were immediately

countrymen conquered the world, not so much by strength and policy, as by piety and religion. It is a pity but the Romans had been less religious, and they would have committed fewer crimes.

“There were no certain heads or articles of religion, among the Romans, whence the people might be instructed concerning the being and will of God, or how they might regulate their passions and actions, so as to please him; but all was involved in outward ceremonies, viz. the sacrifices to be made, and the holy-days and public games to be kept, &c. For the rest, the priests were unconcerned as to what the people did or did not believe in divine matters; or whether, after this life, the virtuous and wicked were to expect rewards according to their several deserts; or whether the soul perished together with the body. For we see, that heathens have spoken very dubiously concerning these matters, and the wisest of them have taken these things for inventions wherewith to keep the people in awe. But in their ceremonies they were most exact, performing the same with great pomp and outward show, and rarely admitting of the least alteration.”

Puffendorf's Introduction to the History of Europe, 17, 1699.

connected with the ruin and oppression of the christian cause. The public worship of such an immense number of deities was a source of subsistence, and even of riches to the whole rabble of priests and augurs; and also to a multitude of merchants and artists. And as the progress of the gospel threatened the ruin of this religious traffic, and the profits it produced, this raised up new enemies to the christians, and armed the rage of mercenary superstition against their lives and their cause."

It is generally allowed that the Apocalypse, or Revelation, which God gave to his servant John, contains prophetic intimations of the afflicted state of christian societies, under intolerant magistrates. The trials and tribulations under which the servants of God are animated to constancy and fidelity, seem to be such as they endured in consequence of their christian profession. On the opening of the fifth seal, the beloved disciple saw under the altar, the souls of them who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. On this the sufferers were adorned with the honours of victory, and informed that they should rest for a season, until the number of their fellow servants yet to suffer in the same cause, should be filled up. What more adapted to inspire courage to meet, and

fortitude to endure the horrors of intolerance, than the vivid and variegated displays of future rewards, contained in the Apocalyptic visions!

Nero was the first imperial persecutor under whom the christians suffered. "It would have been surprising," says Mosheim, "if under such a monster of cruelty as Nero, the christians had enjoyed the sweets of tranquillity and freedom." In the tenth year of Nero's reign broke out a fire which spread with irresistible violence over the greatest part of the city. The Emperor affected much humanity towards those sufferers who escaped the fury of the flames, but failed thereby to remove the general impression that he was the incendiary. He therefore accused the christians as the authors of this dreadful calamity, and without affording them an opportunity to prove their innocence proceeded towards them as guilty. "In avenging this crime on the innocent christians, he ordered matters so, that the punishment should bear some resemblance to the offence. He, therefore, wrapped up some of them in combustible garments, and ordered fire to be set to them when the darkness of night came on, that thus, like torches, they might dispel the obscurity of the night; while others were fastened to crosses, or torn to pieces by wild beasts, or put to death in some such dreadful manner."*

Historians are not agreed as to the extent of

* Mosheim,—Cent. 1st. Part I. Chap. v. §0.

this persecution: some confine it to Rome, and others think it was general. "It is evident," says Gibbon, "that the effect as well as the cause of Nero's persecution, was confined to the walls of Rome; that the religious tenets of the Galileans, or christians, were never made a subject of punishment, or even of enquiry; and that, as the idea of their sufferings was, for a long time, connected with the idea of cruelty and injustice, the moderation of succeeding princes, inclined them to spare a sect, oppressed by a tyrant, whose rage had been usually directed against virtue and innocence."*

Domitian, the last of the twelve Cæsars, instituted what has been called the second persecution. On his elevation to the imperial dignity, Domitian, like Nero, concealed the natural obliquity of his mind and savageness of his disposition, by an assumed and assiduous devotion to rectitude, clemency and liberality. He soon, however, threw aside the disguise and developed his real character in acts of capricious cruelty and lewdness. Though hateful, he proscribed and sentenced to death those he suspected of not loving him; and being conscious that he was unworthy of the throne, practised the most detestable cruelties, to discover schemes of treason and rebellion. A vague report of an ancient prophecy made him apprehensive of a rival of the house

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xvi. 404.

of David, and therefore he cited before his tribunal two grandsons of Jude the apostle, and the brother of Christ; the prisoners acknowledged their royal extraction and their relationship to the Messiah, but affirmed that the kingdom for which they looked was wholly spiritual and angelic in its nature; they showed also on their hands, the marks of the daily labour by which they subsisted; their rustic appearance and simple answers satisfied the jealous tyrant that his alarm was groundless, and procured their release. It is supposed that about this time, (A. D. 95,) the apostle John was banished to Patmos, an isle in the Ægean sea.* The most distinguished victims of Domitian's persecution, were his cousin Flavius Clemens, a man of consular dignity, and his niece Flavia Domitilla: the former had scarcely finished the term of his consulship, when he was condemned and executed; and the latter was exiled to Pontia, a bleak and barren island, on the coast of Campania.

Second Century.

"In the beginning of this century, there were no laws in force against the christians, for the senate had annulled the cruel edicts of Nero, and Nerva

* The story of his being cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, and coming out unhurt, is apocryphal.

had abrogated the sanguinary laws of his predecessor, Domitian. But notwithstanding this, a horrid custom prevailed of persecuting the christians, and even of putting them to death, as often as a bloody priesthood, or an outrageous populace, set on by them, demanded their destruction. Hence, it happened, that even under the reign of the good Trajan, popular clamours were raised against the christians, many of whom fell victims to the rage of a merciless multitude. Such were the riotous proceedings that happened in Bythinia, under the administration of Pliny the younger, who upon that occasion wrote to the Emperor, to know in what manner he was to conduct himself towards the christians.*

Pliny was held in the highest estimation for the greatness of his virtues, and the splendour of his talents. He was made proconsul by Trajan, in the year 100, at which time, he was thirty-eight years of age. His letter to the Emperor, together with the Emperor's rescript, are documents whose authenticity has never been questioned, and of the utmost importance for illustrating the history of this period.

* Mosheim, — Cent. 2nd, Part I. Chap. iii. 157.

*A. D. 107. C. Pliny to the Emperor Trajan
wishes health.*

SIRE,

It is usual with me to consult you in every matter wherein I am in doubt, and to submit to your determination; for who better than yourself can direct me when I hesitate, or instruct me where uninformed? 'Till now I never had occasion to be present at any criminal process against christians. I am ignorant therefore to what extent it is usual to inflict punishment, or urge prosecution. I have much hesitated also, whether there should not be a distinction made between the young and old; and in the application of the torture, whether there should not be a difference between the robust and the delicate; whether pardon should not be offered to penitence; or whether an openly professing christian shall be allowed to retract, in order to escape punishment; whether the profession itself is to be regarded as a crime, however innocent in other respects the professor may be; or whether the crimes attached to the name, must be proved, before they are liable to suffer.

In the interval, my method with the christians who have been impeached as such, has been this: I interrogated them, Are you christians? If they avowed it, I asked the same question a second and a third time, threatening them with the pu-

nishment decreed by the law : if they still persisted, I ordered them to be executed on the spot ; for, whatever their profession of religion might be, I had not the least doubt that such perverseness and inflexible obstinacy, certainly ought to be punished. There were others infected with this madness, whom being Roman citizens, I adjudged to be transported to Rome, for your immediate cognizance.

In the discussion of this matter, accusations multiplying, a diversity of cases occurred. A schedule of names was sent me by an unknown accuser ; but when I cited the persons, many denied the fact, that they were, or ever had been christians : and repeating after me the usual formula, addressed the gods, and offered supplications with wine and frankincense to your image, which, with the statues of other deities, I had ordered to be produced, adding their maledictions of Christ, to which no real christian, I am assured, by any torments could be compelled. These therefore I thought proper to discharge.

Others named by an informer, at first acknowledged themselves christians, and then denied it ; pretending, that though they had been such, they had renounced the profession, some for three years, others for a longer time, and a few for more than twenty. All these adored your image and the statues of the gods, and at the same time called Christ an accursed object.

From their affirmations I learned, that the sum of all their offence, call it fault or error, was, that

on a day fixed they used to assemble before sunrise, and sing together in alternate responses hymns to Christ, as a deity; binding themselves by the solemn engagements of an oath, not to commit any manner of wickedness; to be guilty neither of theft, nor robbery, nor adultery: never to break a promise, or keep back a deposit, when called upon. This service being concluded, it was their custom to separate, and meet together again for a repast, promiscuous indeed, and without any distinction of rank or sexes, but perfectly harmless: and even from this they had desisted, since the publication of my edict, forbidding, according to your orders, all clubs and associations.

For farther information, I thought it necessary, in order to come at the truth, to put two damsels, who were called deaconesses, to the torture; but I could extort nothing from them but the acknowledgment of a superstition, depraved as immoderate; and therefore, desisting from farther investigation, I hasted to consult you; for, indeed, the matter appeared to me deserving the most attentive consideration, especially in the view of the immense numbers of those who are involved in this dangerous predicament; for informations are already brought against multitudes of all ages, of all orders, and of both sexes; and more will be impeached, for the contagion of this superstition has not only widely spread over the cities and villages, but reached even the farm-houses. I am of opinion, however, that it may yet be stopped

and corrected ; for it is even evident that the temples, which I found nearly deserted, begin to be frequented ; and the sacred solemnities, that for a long while had been suspended, are come again into practice : so that now there is a brisk sale for victims for sacrifices, where before there scarcely could be found a purchaser. From whence I cannot but conclude, that the bulk of the people may be reclaimed, if impunity be allowed to repentance.

Trajan to Pliny.

My Dear Pliny,

You have certainly followed the right track, in the discussion of the causes, relative to the impeachment of the christians. No certain rule can be laid down, invariably to be adhered to in all cases. They are not to be hunted up by informers, but if impeached and convicted, let them be executed : only with this restriction, that if any person deny that he is a christian, and demonstrate it by offering supplication to our gods, however suspicious his conduct may have been before, his penitence shall secure his pardon. But unless every information has the accuser's name annexed, whatever be the crime charged, it is not to be regarded ; as it would be a precedent of the worst sort, and totally contrary to the maxims of my government."

Many writers are silent as to the origin of this persecution. The following appears to me the most rational account of it:—

“Trajan ascended the throne of the Cæsars in the year 98. He had not been long invested with the imperial dignity, when he was persuaded to look upon the christians with a suspicious eye.—The extreme veneration which he professed for the religion of the empire, set him against all innovation, and the progress of christianity gave him alarm. A law was passed by which all Heteriæ, or societies dissenting from the established religion, were interdicted, as nurseries of imposture and sedition. Under the sanction of this law, the christians were persecuted in all parts of the empire. Numbers were put to death both in popular tumults, and by edicts and judicial proceedings.”

It seems, therefore, that the humane and magnanimous Trajan, unhappily for his memory, was the main prompter of this persecution. This opinion is further supported by the following letter of Tiberianus, governor of the province of Syria, to the Emperor:—

“I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the Galilæans, or those of the sect called christians, *according to your orders*. Yet they never cease to profess, voluntarily, what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore, I have laboured, by exhortations and threats, to discourage them from daring to confess to me, that

they are of that sect. Yet in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased, therefore, to let me know, what your highness thinks proper to be done with them."*

About the ninth year of his reign, Trajan having obtained a victory over the Scythians and Daci, marched to Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, to make preparations for an expedition against the Parthians and Armenians. Ignatius, sur-named Theophrastus, was at this time a christian pastor, or bishop, in this city; and being anxious to obtain the crown of martyrdom, he presented himself, uncalled for, before the Emperor, who sentenced him to be escorted as a prisoner to Rome, and to be thrown to the wild beasts. He was accordingly consumed in the amphitheatre by lions.

Trajan died of a fit of the apoplexy, in the twentieth year of his reign, as he was returning from his oriental campaign, and was succeeded by Adrian, his nephew.

Under the pacific reign of Adrian, the political circumstances of the christians were considerably meliorated. In the sixth year of his reign the Emperor visited Athens, where he was initiated in the Elusinian mysteries. Quadratus, a distinguished member of the christian society in Athens, took the opportunity of the Emperor's presence, to address to him an apology in behalf of the Christian faith.

* Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 201. Dub. Ed. 1749.

This appeal to the Emperor, was followed with another of similar tendency, by Aristides. It now appeared no easy thing, to calm or controul the violence of an ignorant and infatuated populace. The magistrates were compelled, by mobs assembled, to celebrate their religious games and festivals, to summon the christians to conform or perish. Such occurrences induced Serenus Granius, proconsul of Asia, to address a memorial to the Emperor, in which he stated, that "It seemed to him unreasonable that the christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without being convicted of any crime." It seems, that at this time, Granius was about to quit his office. The Emperor addressed the following rescript to his successor Minutius Fundanus :—

"I have received a letter written to me by the very illustrious Serenus Granius, whom you have succeeded. To me, then, the affair seems by no means fit to be slightly passed over, that men may not be disturbed without cause, and that sycophants may not be encouraged in their odious practices. If the people of the province will appear publicly, and make open charges against the christians, so as to give them an opportunity to answer for themselves let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude demands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any person will accuse them, that *you* should take cognizance of these matters. If, therefore, any

accuse, and shew that they actually break the laws, do you determine according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules, if the charge be a mere calumny, do you estimate the enormity of such calumny, and punish as it deserves."

In the reigns of Trajan and Adrian, the Jews put a finishing stroke to their misery by a general insurrection, in which they killed Heathens and Christians, without distinction, to the number of five hundred thousand. An impostor, who called himself Barcochab, *the son of a star*, in allusion to the star whose rising Balaam predicted, put himself at the head of a fanatical and merciless banditti, and carried on the carnage with systematic barbarity. The army of Barcochab soon amounted to two hundred thousand. Bitter, the headquarters of the impostor, stood a siege of three years. As the Jews had shown no mercy, they expected none; and therefore defended themselves against the disciplined troops of Adrian with the obstinacy of despair.

It is said that six hundred thousand Jews fell by the sword in this war, besides numbers that perished by famine and pestilence. Annual fairs were held for the sale of captive Jews. A city named *Ælia*, in honour of *Ælius Adrianus*, was built where Jerusalem had once stood; a marble statue of a swine was erected over the gate which led to Bethlehem, and it was made a capital crime for a Jew to approach the city or so much as look

to it. Thus perished the miserable remains of a once powerful nation.

A D. 138, Adrian died and left the empire to Titus Antoninus Pius, a senator, then about fifty years of age, and encircled with the lustre of wisdom and virtue. The late Emperor had required of Pius, that he should immediately adopt and associate with him, in the administration, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, a youth of about seventeen. "Although Pius had two sons, he preferred the welfare of Rome to the interest of his family, gave his daughter Faustina in marriage to the young Marcus, obtained from the senate the tribunitian and proconsular powers, and, with a noble disdain, or rather ignorance of jealousy, associated him to all the labours of government. Marcus, on the other hand, revered the character of his benefactor, loved him as a parent, obeyed him as a sovereign, and, after he was no more, regulated his own administration by the example and maxims of his predecessor. Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government." *

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, vol. I. 124. Pius was no sooner seated on the throne, than he lessened the taxes, observing, *that he would rather be poor, than have his coffers filled at the expence of an oppressed people.* Secondly, he disposed of the greatest part of his private estate to indigent citizens. And, thirdly, he suppressed several pensions which Adrian had granted to useless persons, observing, *that he could not bear to see the state devoured by those who were of no service to it.*

General History of the World, Vol. IV. 485.

The imperial edicts hitherto issued in favour of the persecuted christians, proved insufficient to protect them from the wily malice of their enemies. No christian was to be punished without being clearly convicted of some crime; but it was not explicitly declared, that the obstinate refusal to cast a grain of incense on the altars of the gods, was not of itself a crime. Hence the professors of christianity still suffered under charges of impiety and atheism. A new incentive to violence was furnished by some earthquakes which happened in Asia, and which the priests interpreted as indications of the displeasure of the gods, because their worship was forsaken by the christians.

These occurrences, with others of a similar nature, induced Justin Martyr, a philosopher of the celebrated school of Alexandria, to write his first Apology for the christians, which he published, and presented to the Emperor Pius, in the fifteenth year of his reign.

The Emperor was so wrought upon by the representations of Justin, and by information which he received from other persons about the same time, that he addressed a letter on the subject to the common council of Asia, held at Ephesus.—There are several expressions in this letter somewhat adapted to leave the impression, that it has been altered or interpolated; but it is enough for our purpose, that nearly all historians, who treat

on the times in question, refer to it, or quote it, as in the main a genuine document.*

The Emperor to the Common Council of Asia.

“ I am quite of opinion, that the gods will take care to discover such persons. For it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them than you, if they be able. But you harass and vex the christians, and accuse them of atheism and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes, which have happened in times past or lately, it is not proper to remind you of your own despondency, when they happen; and to desire you to compare your spirit with theirs, and observe how serenely they confide in God? In such season you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship. You live in the practical ignorance of the supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning these same men, some others of the provincial governors wrote to our

* Eusebius. Eccl. Hist. Book IV.—Mosheim's History and Commentaries.—Haweis's Impartial and Succinct History of the Church.—General History of the World.—History of the Waldenses, by Mr. Jones. This letter has been erroneously ascribed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Philosophus.

divine father Adrian, to whom he returned for answer— ‘ That they should not be molested, unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government.’ Many also have made application to me concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will persist in accusing the christians merely as such, let the accused be acquitted, though he be a christian, and let the accuser be punished.”

Letters to the same purport were addressed to other provinces, and a general stop was thereby put to the operations of fanaticism and cruelty.— It is supposed that during the remaining part of the reign of Pius, the disciples of Christ enjoyed profound peace.

Having sustained the imperial dignity twenty-three years, and enriched the world with the emanations of his wisdom and benevolence, the just—the great—the generous Antoninus Pius expired.*

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, on whom the weight of the empire now devolved, was, from his youth, and through the whole of his life, extremely

* Mr. Pope’s elegant compliment would have been bestowed with much more propriety on Pius than on his successor Marcus Aurelius :—

Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or, failing, smiles in exile or in chains ;
Like good Aurelius, let him reign ; or bleed
Like Socrates ; that man is great indeed.

Essay on Man, Epist. IV.

devoted to philosophy, on account of which he was surnamed Philosophus. The fine endowments and princely actions of this Emperor are highly extolled by all historians. "It is not, however," says Mosheim, "in his conduct towards the christians that we must look for the reasons of these pompous encomiums; for here, the clemency and justice of that Emperor suffer a strange eclipse. He did not, indeed, revoke the edict of Antoninus Pius, or abrogate the laws which the preceding Emperors had enacted in favour of the christians; but he did what was equally pernicious to them. Without examining impartially their cause, he lent an easy and attentive ear to all the most virulent insinuations of their enemies, and more especially to the malignant calumnies of the philosophers, who accused them of the most horrid crimes, and the most monstrous impiety."

Several persons of eminence in the christian profession were now put to death, among whom may be mentioned the aged and venerable Polycarp, who was for more than eighty years pastor of the church in Smyrna; and Justin, already mentioned, who addressed his second apology to the Emperor Philosophus.

These instances, with those of Ptolemy and Lucius, put it out of question that the disciples of Christ were doomed to die for no other crime but that of being such: it may be added, that there was no more lenity shown in the execution of

christians, than there was justice in sentencing them. The rage of persecution extended from the east to the west, and proved fatal to many of the professors of christianity at Vienne and Lyons in Gaul. The names of several of the sufferers are Greek; and it is probable that they were refugees, who had sought, at Vienne and Lyons, an asylum from the storms of intolerance in Greece and Asia Minor. The most barbarous tortures were inflicted on the innocent christians to make them criminate themselves; and, when this artifice failed, domestic slaves were taken from their houses, and induced, by the persuasions of the persecutors and the dread of torture, to accuse their masters of repeating the unnatural crimes of *Œdipus* and *Thyestes*. It would seem, however, that these malicious slanders were unnecessary, except to swell the madness of popular rage, as several were put to torture and death instantly on confessing themselves christians.

Our philosophic Emperor was succeeded by his son *Commodus*, who made haste to exemplify vices most repugnant to his father's virtues, and to heap misery on his subjects, and infamy on himself. "The beloved son of *Marcus*," says *Gibbon*, "succeeded to his father, amidst the acclamations of the senate and armies, and when he ascended the throne, the happy youth saw round him neither competition to remove, nor enemies to punish. In this calm elevated station, it was surely natural, that he should prefer the love of

man kind to their detestation, the mild glories of his five predecessors, to the ignominious fate of Nero and Domitian." But Commodus paid no more regard to the dictates of nature, than to the example of his father; but endeavoured to procure a detestable celebrity, by acts of eccentric wickedness. Happily for the christians, they were not singled out by Commodus as the objects of his licentious cruelty: on the contrary, it would seem that he suspended the operation of the laws which had been put in force against them in the reign of his father. This is not the only instance in which the professors of christianity were more happily circumstanced under a bad emperor, than under a good one. When a man's religion stimulates him to do evil, it renders him, in that particular, a few degrees worse than a man who has no religion. The Emperor eluded assassination for nearly thirteen years, when a period was put to his reign and life at once; and Publius Pertinax, prefect of the city, a senator of consular rank, who had risen to the highest dignities by his merit, was elected to fill the vacant throne.

Perhaps no prince ever did more good in a short time than Pertinax. But such had been the progress of degeneracy in the late reign, that for the new Emperor to show himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him, was to expose himself to the greatest peril. After a short but honourable reign of eighty seven days, Pertinax was killed by the Prætorian guards, who proceeded im-

mediately to sell the empire, by public auction, to the highest bidder. The prodigious wealth of Didius Julianus enabled him to make the purchase; but he saw that the opprobrious bargain deprived him of honour, and exposed him to shame; and that the applause of the Prætorian camp, was but a feeble support against the execration of the city and the empire.

Septimus Severus was at the head of the Pannonian legions, when he heard of the murder of Pertinax, and of the sale of the empire. He made no delay to acquaint his troops with what had taken place in the capital, and to animate them to avenge by their arms the insults offered to the Roman name and dignity.

The legions entered with ardour into the designs of their general, and saluted him by the names of Augustus, Pertinax, and Emperor. Severus was too well acquainted with the duties due to himself, to suffer the enthusiasm of his troops to subside; he therefore, without loss of time, put his army in order for the march, and in forty days, advanced from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber.

The Third Century.

Severus observed, that lenity had been fatal to some of his predecessors, and therefore resolved, that it should not be a source of danger to him-

self. In avoiding this virtue, the exercise of which was become dangerous, the Emperor fell into the opposite extreme : hence, it is said, that he never forgave a fault, or performed an act of humanity. It was not, however, until the tenth year of his reign, A. D. 202, that he gave a formal display of his characteristic severity towards the christians. He then issued a law, strictly forbidding all the subjects of the empire to change the religion of their ancestors, for that of the jews, or the christians. A little of that finesse employed by the apologists of the Inquisition may harmonize this persecuting edict with the claims of religious liberty, as it restricted no man in the enjoyment of the religion in which he was brought up, but was directed against the progress of a new heresy.— This law, however, put in action by unjust and avaricious magistrates, became an engine of extensive and intolerable oppression to the disciples of Christ. The poor were put to exquisite torture, that the rich might be thereby induced to purchase impunity, with substantial bribes. Among persons of distinction sacrificed by this law, are mentioned Leonidas, the father of Origin, Irenaus of Lyons, Victor of Rome, and Perpetua and Felicitas, two ladies of Africa.

Severus died at York, A. D. 211, in the eighteenth year of his reign.

During the six years and two months in which Caracalla wore and disgraced the purple, the professors of christianity enjoyed protection and

repose. The vicious passions of Caracalla raised and supported a tempest, which agitated the empire from the centre to the circumference; but during the convulsions of anarchy and despotism, the disciples of Christ were favoured with peace and prosperity.

The transient reign of Macrinus supplies no incidents pertaining to our subject. The soldiers who raised Macrinus to the throne deposed and killed him, and elevated to that high and important station Elagabalus, priest of Emesa, a profligate youth of fourteen. The disgusting enormities of the young Emperor would pass for fiction, if they were not too well authenticated. It is pleasant, however, to observe, that while Elagabalus was revelling in all the excesses of obscene intemperance and impious folly, and showing himself a monster of cruelty as well as of lewdness, the christians were unmolested. In less than four years, the high priest of Emesa exhausted the patience of the empire, and brought upon himself the ignominious death which he had amply merited.

The character of Alexander Severus, who succeeded to the vacant throne, is adorned with an assemblage of mild and resplendent virtues, which render it altogether as amiable as that of his predecessor is offensive. Some few professors of christianity suffered in the reign of Alexander Severus; but that generous prince was so far from prompting, that he restrained the violence of per-

secution, and, by repeated acts of kindness, convinced the christians that he was their friend. It is said, that he had such a veneration for the author of the christian religion, that he placed a statue of him in his domestic chapel. The Emperor's mother, Julia Mammæa, was partial to christianity, and it is supposed that she communicated to her affectionate and susceptible son, her own sentiments and wishes on that subject. While at Antioch with the Emperor, A. D. 229, this distinguished lady sent for the famous Origin, and heard what he had to say in favour of the christian faith. Those, however, who affirm that Mammæa and her son embraced the Gospel, must be considered as speaking according to their wishes, rather than historical evidence.

The elegant accomplishments and princely virtues of the Emperor, were insufficient to protect him from the licentious ferocity of his incorrigible soldiers. He was assassinated in his tent, in the twenty-seventh year of his age, and in the fourteenth of his reign.

The imperial dignity next devolved to Maximin, a Thracian peasant, who quitted the occupation of a herdsman, for that of a soldier. His stature was eight feet and a half, and the ambition of his mind was equal to the gigantic bulk of his body.

Some feats of muscular strength, in which he had no rival, caused Maximin to be noticed, and advanced in the Roman army: the more power he obtained, the more he desired; and at length,

disdaining to rise any longer by the slow gradation of office, he fixed his eye on the purple, and conspired against the life of his friend and benefactor. The Pannonian recruits whom Maximin was initiating in military discipline, first saluted him *Emperor*: the rest of the army followed their example, on Maximin's making a solemn declaration, that *he was not accessory to the death of the late Emperor*.

The professors of christianity were inspired with such confidence by the favour of Alexander Severus, that in the room of worshipping, as they had hitherto done, in private houses and sequestered places, they erected commodious edifices in places of public resort. The barbarous Thracian, thought it expedient to destroy all whom his polished predecessor either loved or honoured, and therefore instituted a massacre, in which great numbers of christians, of each sex and every rank, perished in the promiscuous carnage. This outrage of Maximin's jealous policy, is called by the martyrologists, the sixth general persecution; in which, there is some impropriety, as it does not appear that the christians suffered as such, but as the friends and partizans of the late Emperor. The kind attention paid by Alexander Severus to the pastors of christian churches, who occasionally visited his court and palace, accounts for their suffering more severely from the rage of Maximin than others of their brethren.

Mr. Gibbon ascribes the cruelty of Maximin to

his fear of contempt. “ Though he depended on the attachment of the soldiers, who loved him for virtues like their own, he was conscious that his mean and barbarian origin, his savage appearance, and his total ignorance of the arts and institutions of civil life, formed a very unfavourable contrast with the amiable manners of the unhappy Alexander. He remembered, that, in his humbler fortune, he had often waited before the door of the haughty nobles of Rome, and had been denied admittance by the insolence of their slaves. He recollected too, the friendship of a few who had relieved his poverty, and assisted his rising hopes. But those who had spurned, and those who had protected the Thracian, were guilty of the same crime, *the knowledge of his original obscurity*.— For this crime many were put to death; and by the execution of several of his benefactors, Maximin published, in characters of blood, the indelible history of his baseness and ingratitude.”*

In the shifting scenes of tumult and violence which followed the usurpation and tyranny of Maximin, there is nothing of moment which pertains to our subject. Such was the anarchy of the Roman world in these miserable times, that to be declared Emperor was nearly equivalent to a sentence of outlawry. The two Gordians were scarcely invested with the ensigns of empire, when they were compelled to resign them, together with

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, vol. i. 278.

their lives : Pupienus and Balbinus had worn the purple but fourteen months, when they were dragged from the palace, and stabbed, by the Prætorian guards.* The third Gordian, whose virtues deserved a better destiny, was the next victim of imperial greatness ; while engaged in war with Sapor, king of Persia, who had invaded the empire, his troops mutinied, and insisted that he should admit to a partnership in the throne, their favourite, Philip, the Arabian. The generous youth, unwilling to shed Roman blood, agreed to the proposal, but his unworthy colleague soon became dissatisfied with half the throne, and endeavoured to engross the whole, which base attempt the virtuous Gordian resisted, at the expence of his life.

The means by which Philip made himself master of the empire, are far from prepossessing us in his favour : it was vile for him to use his influence as captain of the guards, to alienate the minds of the soldiers from their sovereign ; and viler still, when raised to a participation in the throne, to indulge his unprincipled ambition to the destruction of his benefactor. We expect, that a man who

* He who wishes to form a just estimate of what is to be expected from a standing army, and a military government, will do well to view, and consider attentively, the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The gradual decay and dissolution of this vast commonwealth, developes the artful and imposing policy of Augustus, and show that there is no man so dangerous to society, as a wise and good tyrant.

obtains power by dishonourable means, will employ it to dishonourable purposes : but Philip, by the equity and beneficence of his conduct, as Emperor, did much to efface the remembrance of the crimes, whereby he became such.

Philip is the first Emperor, whose conversion to christianity is attested on plausible evidence : treatises have been written on this question, which after all, as it regards us, is rather a matter of curiosity than importance. Eusebius describes the penitence of Philip when received by the church, but that writer is not always a safe guide in doubtful circumstances. The learned Origin wrote letters to Philip, to his wife, and to his mother, most probably on the truth and importance of the christian faith ; and it is certain, that the Emperor was a decided friend and protector to the professors of the Gospel.

Decius supplanted Philip in the sixth year of his reign, in a way very similar to that in which Philip had supplanted his predecessor. The princely endowments of Decius are highly extolled by historians : towards the christians, however, he displayed the qualities of a mean and barbarous tyrant, rather than those of a just and magnanimous prince. “ This Emperor,” says Mosheim, “ either from an ill-grounded fear of the christians, or from a violent zeal for the superstition of his ancestors, published most terrible and cruel edicts, by which the prætors were ordered, upon pain of death, either to extirpate the whole

body of christians without exception, or to force them, by torments of various kinds, to return to the Pagan worship. Hence, in all the provinces of the empire, multitudes of christians were, during the space of two years, put to death by the most horrid punishments which an ingenious barbarity could invent.* This sanguinary and preposterous conduct of the Emperor towards a numerous and inoffensive class of his subjects, is ascribed by different writers to different motives. "The virtues of this prince," says Mr. Gibbon, "will scarcely allow us to suspect that he was actuated by a mean resentment against the favourites of his predecessor; and it is more reasonable to believe, that, in the prosecution of his general design to restore the purity of Roman manners, he was desirous of delivering the empire from what he condemned as a recent and criminal superstition."† Supposing that, in the estimation of Decius, it was criminal for Romans to abandon the gods of their country, still he could not but know that the penalties which he enacted against this crime were altogether disproportionate to its guilt; it was surely in the highest degree impolitic for the Emperor to commission one class of his subjects to destroy another, on a question of manners or superstition, when the energy of every Roman was necessary to the defence of the empire

* Eccles. Hist. Cent. 3. Part. 1. Chap. 2. 250.

† Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. 16. 443.

against the irruptions of its northern invaders.* The character and conduct of some professors and teachers of christianity in these times, was such, as gives some countenance to the insinuation, that the sagacity of Decius discovered pride under the mask of humility, and saw likewise, through the fair disguise of spiritual authority, the rude elements of a new dominion, subversive of the secular magistracy. Cyprian of Carthage, who distinguished himself as a writer in defence of christianity, about the middle of this century, confesses—That the principal study of the bishops of his time was to get money and estates—that they followed after pride, and were at leisure for nothing but emulation and quarrelling;—and, that they neglected the simplicity of the faith, and renounced the world in words only.

* No sooner was the dangerous secret of the wealth and weakness of the Roman empire revealed to the world, than new swarms of barbarians spread devastation through the frontier provinces, and terror as far as the gates of Rome. The Franks, the Allemani, the Goths, and adventurers of less considerable tribes, comprehended under these general appellations, poured like a torrent on different parts of the empire. Rapine and oppression destroyed the produce of the present, and the hope of the future harvests.—A long and general famine was followed by a wasting plague, which for fifteen years, ravaged every city and province of the Roman empire; yet the tide of emigration still continued at intervals to roll impetuously from the north, and the succession of martial princes, who repaired the misfortunes of their predecessors, and propt the falling fate of the empire, had to accomplish the labours of Hercules in freeing the Roman territory from these barbarous invaders.—*Malthus on Population*, Book I. chap. vi. 69.

But, whatever might be the cause, the consequences of the Emperor's prejudice against the christians were serious indeed. The persecution, instituted by the imperial edicts, was not confined to Rome or Italy, but raged through the empire; and its severity was equal to its extent. To enter into the minutiae of the various methods of torture, practised on the professors of the gospel, to induce them to renounce their faith and offer incense to the imperial gods, would rather disgust than please my readers; it may suffice to say, that they were very similar to those more recently employed by a certain *holy office*, which still disgraces the christian name, for the suppression of heresy. Could we controvert the unequivocal attestations of authentic history, we should be disposed to doubt, whether Roman magistrates *could* stoop so low as to anticipate the shabby and infernal devices of Spanish inquisitors.

Gallus purchased an ignominious peace of the Goths, and gave himself up to intemperance and persecution.

Valerian, during the four first years of his reign, showed clemency and kindness to the christians worthy of an Emperor; but, in the fifth, Macrian, a native of Egypt, who had obtained an ascendancy over the mind of Valerian, persuaded him that the empire would never flourish till the worship of the gods was restored to its former splendour, and the superstition of the christians utterly and for ever abolished. Hence, at the persuasion

of an ignorant and bigoted minion, the Emperor cast a shade over the early part of his reign, and charged the latter with acts of misrule and cruelty. The edicts promulgated on this occasion, exposed the property and persons of all seceders from paganism, to the fanaticism and avarice of priests and magistrates, and diffused through the empire a complicated system of plunder and persecution, which continued for the space of three years and a half.

The devastations committed on the empire by Sapor, King of Persia, obliged Valerian, though in the seventieth year of his age, to march into the east, where he engaged the Persian army near the walls of Edessa. The counsels of Macrian proved as fatal to his master abroad, as they had been mischievous at home. At the advice of this unworthy minister, the Emperor posted his troops in a disadvantageous situation, in consequence of which, their valour and skill became useless, great numbers of them were cut to pieces, and the rest made prisoners of war. The haughty conqueror treated the ill-advised and unfortunate Valerian, with a refinement of insolence and cruelty, which has few parallels.

Gallienus was too much of a stoic or a libertine, to be deeply affected by the captivity and sufferings of his aged father; and a heart not susceptible of impressions from such a source, was not likely to be much affected by the calamities which pressed upon the empire. This Emperor was

remarkable for nothing less than reflection: it is said, however, that he was induced to enact a law which protected christians in the free exercise of their religion, by reflecting, that before his father persecuted, he was prosperous, and that afterwards, the events of his life were adverse. The reign of Gallienus, though but of eight years continuance, was enlivened by the rise and fall of nineteen pretenders to the throne, who have been very improperly styled, *the thirty tyrants*, not one of which died a natural death.

The most remarkable event in the life of Claudius, was a signal victory, which that heroic prince obtained over three hundred and twenty thousand Goths. It is not less to the praise of Claudius, that he held the balances of justice with an equal hand, and restrained his subjects from oppressing and vexing each other.

Aurelian had the courage of Cæsar, but not his clemency: it is said, that he was a good physician for the public, but that he drew too much blood.

Having displayed his military accomplishments in several successful engagements with the Allemanni and Vandals, the emperor carried his arms to Palmyra, against Zenobia, the elegant but warlike queen of the east. The dignified generosity which Aurelian displayed on several occasions, shows that his severity did not proceed from the savageness of his nature, but from an apprehension that it was expedient for the accomplishment of his designs.

“Zenobia being conquered,” says Echard, “the prelates of the east addressed themselves to the Emperor, petitioning him to remove Paul from Antioch, who had joined with Zenobia, and still kept possession of the bishopric. Aurelian was so much a friend to the christians, as to comply with their requests, and ordered that Paul’s palace should be delivered up to whom the bishops in Italy and Rome should assign it by their letters.”*

This application of the bishops for the aid of the secular power, together with the Emperor’s condescending compliance, are so novel and so portentous, that they cannot but fix the attention of the reader.

It is easy for designing men to support an assumed character in circumstances of ease and composure; it is more difficult to do so in commotions occasioned by repugnant sentiments and clashing interests. It is no uncommon thing to hear persons deprecate controversy, as though it were the guilty parent of all the evils which it brings to light. A little reflection may satisfy us, that the tempers which break out and agitate society, in seasons of controversy and reformation, existed in the body, previous to their eruption. A short view of the controversy respecting Paul of Samosata, and of that which arose a short time before and continued long after, respecting Novatian, may serve to correct our mistakes or

* Eccles. Hist. Cent. 3. Book III. Chap. vi.

enlarge our knowledge, as to the internal state of the christian profession at this period.

The gospel flourished at Antioch in the days of the apostles, and the honourable name of christians was there first given to its professors. If the antiquity of a church could ensure its purity, that of Antioch in the third century would have retained its primitive faith and manners, and stood aloof from the disgusting pomp and folly of paganism. "When he harangued his people from the pulpit," says Gibbon, "Paul affected the figurative style, and the theatrical gestures of an Asiatic Sophist, while the *Cathedral* resounded with the loudest and most extravagant acclamations in praise of his divine eloquence. Against those who resisted his power, or refused to flatter his vanity, the prelate of Antioch was arrogant, rigid and inexorable; but he relaxed the discipline and lavished the treasures of the church on his dependent clergy, who were permitted to imitate their master in the gratification of every sensual appetite. Notwithstanding these scandalous vices, if Paul of Samosata had preserved the purity of the orthodox faith, his reign over the capital of Syria would have ended only with his life; and had a seasonable persecution intervened, an effort of courage might have placed him in the rank of saints and martyrs."

The aberrations of Paul from the received opinions, consisted in some metaphysical subtilties, respecting the divine nature, the detail of which

would not be interesting to my readers, though they excited a strong and general emotion among the contemporaries of Paul. "From Egypt to the Euxine sea, the bishops were in arms and in motion. Several councils were held, confutations were published, ambiguous explanations were by turns accepted and refused, treaties were concluded and violated, and at length Paul of Samosata was degraded from his episcopal character, by the sentence of seventy or eighty bishops, who assembled for that purpose at Antioch, and who, without consulting the rights of the clergy or people, appointed a successor by their own authority.

The manifest irregularity of this proceeding increased the numbers of the discontented faction; and as Paul who was no stranger to the arts of courts, had insinuated himself into the favour of Zenobia, he maintained above four years the possession of the episcopal house and office. The victory of Aurelian changed the face of the east, and the two contending parties, who applied to each other the epithets of schism and heresy, were either commanded or permitted to plead their cause before the tribunal of the conqueror. This public and very singular trial affords a convincing proof, that the existence, the property, the privileges, and the internal policy of the christians, were acknowledged, if not by the laws, at least by the magistrates of the empire."*

* Decline and Fall, Chap. 16, 446.

It is very probable that Paul was placed in some secular office of dignity and emolument in Antioch by Zenobia, "hence his council-chamber and throne, the splendour with which he appeared in public, the suppliant crowd who solicited his attention, the multitude of letters and petitions to which he dictated his answers, and the perpetual hurry of business in which he was involved."

The character of Paul, is far from exciting sentiments in his favour, but if he was as criminal as he is represented, it is surprising that the church at Antioch did not make some effort to obtain redress. It does not appear that this was the case. Admitting that the church was generally corrupt, it not strange, there was not at least a small number opposed to the prevalence of wickedness? It seems, however, that all was harmony between the pastor and the flock, until the bishops interposed. If Paul had stood on slippery ground, the sentence of his spiritual brethren would, in all probability, have displaced him; but he retained his station for upwards of four years in opposition to their usurped authority; and even after he was deposed by the secular power, he commanded respect, and the sect of the Paulians perpetuated his name. The bishops who gave sentence against Paul, had no sooner formed themselves into a legislative junta, than they discovered how desirable was the aid of that persecuting power by which they had as yet been oppressed.

The heresy of the *Cathari*, or Puritans, originated about the middle of this century. Novatian, a leading person in the formation of this new community, "was an elder of the church of Rome, a man of extensive learning, holding the same doctrine as the church did; and he published several treatises in defence of what he believed. His address was eloquent and insinuating, and his morals irreproachable. He saw with extreme regret, the intolerable depravity of the church. Christians within the space of a very few years, were caressed by one Emperor, and persecuted by another. In seasons of prosperity, many persons rushed into the church for base purposes. In times of adversity, they denied the faith, and reverted again to idolatry. When the squall was over, away they came again to the church, with all their vices, to deprave others by their examples. The bishops, fond of proselytes, encouraged all this, and transferred the attention of christians from the old confederacy for virtue, to vain shows at Easter, and other Jewish ceremonies adulterated too with paganism. On the death of bishop Fabian, Cornelius a brother elder, and a violent partizan for taking in the multitude, was put in nomination. Novatian opposed him, but as Cornelius carried his election, and he saw no prospect of reformation, but on the contrary a tide of immorality pouring into the church, he withdrew and a great many with him. Cornelius, irritated by Cyprian, who was just in the same condition,

through the remonstrances of virtuous men at Carthage, and who was exasperated beyond measure with one of his own elders, named Novatus, who had quitted Carthage, and gone to Rome to espouse the cause of Novatian, called a council, and got a sentence of excommunication passed against Novatian. In the end Novatian formed a church, and was elected bishop. Great numbers followed his example, and all over the empire, *Puritan* churches were constituted, and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them continued until the Reformation.”*

Eusebius has a chapter devoted to a heretic whom he calls Novatus, but it is obvious that he intends Novatian. Eusebius, Cyprian, and Cornelius, concur in treating Novatian with uncharitableness and acrimony very dishonourable to each of them. Some of the charges brought against the heretic by these prelates, are flatly contradicted by the circumstances in which he was placed, and the part which he acted. Among other sentiments propagated by the bishop of Carthage in the course of this controversy, are the following:—The church of Christ is essentially one—such as are out of the church can hope for

* Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches, 126.—Jones's History of the Waldenses, Vol. I. 252.

no salvation—schism and heresy are the most enormous crimes, which God has always punished with the greatest severity, and—the Novatians are the children of the devil * To reduce the history of ancient heretics and heresies to order and precision, is nearly as difficult as to adjust the fables of Egyptian chronology with matter of fact; but it is pretty evident that the Novatians were guilty of two things, first, of refusing obedience to the demands of episcopal usurpation, and secondly, of denying that there was any virtue in the relics of martyrs.

To return from this digression. The bishops of the East little thought when they solicited the aid of the imperial power to give effect to their decision, that Aurelian was about to commence the ninth general persecution, not of the heretics, but of the christian church. “Elevated with pride and security,” says Echard, “Aurelian began to cast an evil eye upon the innocent christians; and being induced by the advice of some men, he drew up some letters and edicts, designing a severe persecution. But as Eusebius observes, God was pleased to bind up his arms, and while he was perusing and ready to sign his edicts, a thunderbolt from heaven, or lightning, fell so near his person, that all judged him to be slain. As Heaven was pleased to crush this persecution in the embryo, so it thought fit to punish the per-

* Echard's Eccles. Hist. Cent. 3, Book 3.—Jones's Hist. of the Waldenses, Vol. 1, 254.

secutor soon after, while he was beginning a new expedition against the Persians. For having put many persons to death, upon slight occasions, his principal secretary, Mnestheus, began to doubt his own security, having been threatened with death for some offence committed, and knowing him to be nicely punctual in his punishments, he conspired against him, and forged a roll of the names of several persons, as though the Emperor had marked them out for execution, adding his own and some others that were out of favour, to make it appear more plausible. Upon sight of which, the deluded persons, for their own safety, agreed to assassinate the Emperor: and resolving upon the manner, as he passed with a small guard towards Byzantium, they set upon him, and slew him with little or no resistance.* Thus ended, where it began, in the breast of Aurelian, the ninth general persecution under the pagan Emperors. There are recorded, however, some solitary instances of martyrdom, which took place about this time; but as the imperial edicts never came into action, they could not be the cause, unless they were anticipated by the officious zeal of priests and magistrates.

On the death of Aurelian, there ensued an *inter-regnum* of eight months, which was terminated by the election of Tacitus, a descendant of the classic historian of that name, a man of consular

* Eccles. Hist. Book III. Chap. vi.

dignity, and held in high estimation for the wisdom and rectitude of his conduct. The great age of Tacitus rendered him unequal to the difficulties of his station, under the pressure of which he sunk in less than seven months: and was succeeded by Probus, who performed prodigies of valour, and address, and proved himself one of the most able, active, and upright princes that ever swayed the imperial sceptre. The transient reign of Carus and his sons did little more than introduce the more lasting one of Dioclesian and Maximian. According to the accounts of profane historians, the life and reign of Dioclesian were as glorious as his birth and education were obscure and humble. Unfortunately, however, the reign of Dioclesian and his colleague, forms a memorable era in the annals of intolerance, as opening the scene of the tenth and last general persecution.

The tragical end of the Thebœan Legion, cannot but attract the notice of all readers of history, who are fond of the melancholy and the marvellous. It is said, that the Thebœan Legion consisted of upwards of six thousand christian soldiers, who refusing to sacrifice to idols and to persecute their christian brethren at the command of the Emperor Maximian, were first decimated, and then indiscriminately butchered. In the judgment of critics, the story of the Thebœan, like the miracle of the Thundering Legion, is wholly legendary.

To divide the toils and increase the energy of government, each of the Emperors took to himself an adopted son of approved merit: Dioclesian conferred this honour on Galerius, who from his being the son of a cow-herd was surnamed *Armentarius*; Maximian made choice of Constantius, who from the paleness of his countenance had acquired the surname of *Chlorus*. Each of the Emperors made his adopted son his son-in-law, and raised him to the dignity of *Cæsar*.

These four princes governed with much harmony the wide extent of the Roman world: "the suspicious jealousy of power," says Gibbon, "found not any place among them; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist." Unhappily for the repose of the world and the fame of the Emperors, this political symphony was at length interrupted and destroyed by the infernal discord of intolerance.

The Fourth Century.

"We are now arrived at the fourth century of the christian church, the beginning of which was attended with the most terrible storm and conflict that ever was known, and with no less glorious conquest and triumph; so that christianity first vanquished all human powers, and then obliged

them to be real protectors." The famous *era of martyrs* is made to commence with the reign of Dioclesian, probably by the same liberty of speech as that used in the sentence just quoted, which makes the formation of the christian church coeval with the birth of its founder. To suppose, however, that the whole or the greater part of Dioclesian's reign was unpropitious to the liberties of his christian subjects, would be extremely incorrect.

"Amidst the frequent revolutions of the empire, the christians still flourished in peace and prosperity; and notwithstanding a celebrated era of martyrs has been deduced from the accession of Dioclesian, the new system of policy introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince, continued during more than eighteen years, to breathe the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration. The mind of Dioclesian himself was less adapted indeed to speculative inquiries, than to the active labours of war and government. His prudence rendered him averse to any great innovation, and though his temper was not very susceptible of zeal or enthusiasm, he always had a habitual regard for the ancient deities of the empire. But the leisure of the two empresses, of his wife Prisca, and of Valeria his daughter, permitted them to listen with more attention and respect to the truths of christianity, which, in every age, has acknowledged its important obligations to female devotion. The principal

eunuchs, Lucian and Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Andrew, who attended the person, possessed the favour, and governed the household of Dioclesian, protected by their powerful influence, the faith which they had embraced. Their example was imitated by many of the most considerable officers of the palace, who, in their respective stations, had the care of the imperial ornaments, of the robes, of the furniture, of the jewels, and even of the private treasury; and though it might sometimes be incumbent on them to accompany the emperor when he sacrificed in the temple, they enjoyed with their wives, their children, and their slaves, the free exercise of the christian religion. Dioclesian and his colleagues frequently conferred the most important offices on those persons who avowed their abhorrence for the worship of the gods, but who had displayed abilities proper for the service of the state. The bishops held an honourable rank in their respective provinces, and were treated with distinction and respect, not only by the people, but by the magistrates themselves. Almost in every city, the ancient churches were found insufficient to contain the increasing multitude of proselytes; and in their places more stately and capacious edifices were erected, for the public worship of the faithful. The corruption of manners and principles so forcibly lamented by Eusebius, may be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the christians enjoyed and abused

under the reign of Dioclesian. Prosperity had relaxed the nerves of discipline. Fraud, envy, and malice, prevailed in every congregation. The presbyters aspired to the episcopal office, which, every day, became an object more worthy of their ambition. The bishops, who contended with each other for ecclesiastical pre-eminence, appeared by their conduct to claim a secular and tyrannical power in the church; and the lively faith which still distinguished the christians from the gentiles, was shewn much less in their lives, than in their controversial writings.

Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent persecution than any which she had yet endured. The zeal and rapid progress of the christians, awakened the polytheists from their supine indifference in the cause of those deities, whom custom and education had taught them to revere.

The mutual provocations of a religious war, which had already continued above two hundred years, exasperated the animosity of the contending parties. The pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and obscure sect, which presumed to accuse their countrymen of error, and to devote their ancestors to eternal misery.

The habits of justifying the popular mythology, against the invectives of an implacable enemy, produced in their minds, some sentiments of faith and reverence, for a system which they had

been accustomed to consider with the most careless levity. The supernatural powers assumed by the church, inspired at the same time terror and emulation. The followers of the established religion, entrenched themselves behind a similar fortification of prodigies; invented new modes of sacrifice, of expiation, and initiation; attempted to revive the credit of their expiring oracles; and listened with eager credulity to every impostor who flattered their prejudices by a tale of wonders. Both parties seemed to acknowledge the truth of those miracles, which were claimed by their adversaries; and while they were contented with ascribing them to the arts of magic, and to the power of dæmons, they mutually concurred in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition.”*

As the elegant historian of the Roman Empire is accused of being no friend to christianity, it is material to observe, that the sentiments contained in this luminous passage are supported by good authorities, and that other writers of a different way of thinking from Mr. Gibbon, give powerful suffrage to his statements.†

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 2, 448.

† The satirical strain of scepticism which runs through the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Mr. Gibbon's splendid history, seems to have proceeded in part at least from his not distinguishing between the truths taught by Christ and his apostles, and the fables and devices which have been added to them.

"Dioclesian," says Echard,* was a man infinitely superstitious, and being desirous of knowing some future events, caused his diviners to offer many sacrifices; and while they were searching for the usual indications in the entrails, and the Emperor present, some christian courtiers near him made the sign of the cross on their foreheads, which immediately frightened away the dæmons, and put all into confusion. The augurs were also in disorder, and not being able to discern the wonted tokens; and as if they had failed in some little ceremony, began anew, and often repeated them, but to no effect. Whereupon Tages, master of these ceremonies, either seeing the persons, or suspecting them, cried out, That the reason why the sacrifices had not their usual effects, was, because some profane persons had thrust themselves into the assembly, and mixed with the holy solemnities. The Emperor, enraged at this disappointment, commanded his attendants, and all present, to do sacrifice on pain of scourging; and by a warrant to the commanders, ordered all the soldiers in the army to do the same, or to be immediately disbanded. This may be called the beginning of the persecution, though it reached not to capital punishments, and no farther than the soldiery: in which persecution many honourable and profitable posts in the army were abandoned by the christians, who chose to forsake all,

* Eccles. Hist. Book 3, Chap. 7, 659.

rather than renounce the worship of the true God."

We ought not to be surprised that this persecution was violent, when we consider that it was a struggle for life. The established religion of the empire was in the agonies of death, and shook the world with its convulsive throes.

The alarm occasioned by the desertion of the temples and altars, and by the prevailing neglect or contempt of the venerated forms of the ancient religion, was enhanced by the conduct of Constantius Chlorus, the beams of whose benignity and bounty shone as freely on those who left, as on those who adhered to the religion of the state. Many members of the christian community were in the household, and about the person of this mild and amiable prince, in whom they had a protector, as well as a master.

It is said, that when some of the servants of Chlorus changed their religion, in compliance with the imperial edicts, he dismissed them from his service, observing, that those who were not true to their God, would never be faithful to their prince.

The ministers of the gods knew that their authority and temporal comforts would expire, together with their religion, and therefore resolved to make one decisive effort in its defence. They therefore addressed themselves to Dioclesian, and endeavoured by their oracles, to rouse his fears, and

engage his assistance. The impolicy of sacrificing the lives of so many thousands of his subjects at the shrine of religion, presented itself at once to the mind of the cautious Emperor. The priests next addressed themselves to Galerius, a hasty and inconsiderate prince, whose knowledge was confined to the arts of destruction, and whose ferocious temper rendered him a fit agent for executing any sanguinary enterprize.

“ After the success of the Persian war had raised the hopes and the reputation of Galerius, he passed a winter with Dioclesian in the palace of Nicomedia; and the fate of christianity became the object of their secret consultations. The experienced Emperor was still inclined to pursue measures of lenity; and though he readily consented to exclude the christians from holding any employments in the household, or the army, he urged, in the strongest terms, the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics. Galerius at length extorted from him the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons, the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state. The important question was agitated in their presence; and those ambitious courtiers easily discerned, that it was incumbent on them to second, by their eloquence, the importunate violence of the Cæsar. It may be presumed, that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, or the fears of their sovereign in the destruction of

christianity. Perhaps they represented, that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces.

The christians, (it might speciously be alleged,) renouncing the gods and institutions of Rome, had constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed, before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected, in all its parts, by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience.

Arguments like these may seem to have determined the reluctant mind of Dioclesian to embrace a new system of persecution: but though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires, and the councils of the wisest monarchs.

The pleasure of the Emperors was at length signified to the Christians, who, during the course of this melancholy winter, had expected, with anxiety, the result of so many secret consultations. The twenty third of February, A. D. 303, which coincided with the Roman festival of the Terminalia, was appointed (whether from acci-

dent or design) to set bounds to the progress of christianity. At the earliest dawn of the day, the prætorian prefect, accompanied by several generals, tribunes, and officers of the revenue, repaired to the principal church of Nicomedia, which was situated on an eminence in the most populous and beautiful part of the city. The doors were instantly broke open; they rushed into the sanctuary; and as they searched in vain for some visible object of worship, they were obliged to content themselves with committing to the flames the volumes of holy scripture. The ministers of Dioclesian were followed by a numerous body of guards and pioneers, who marched in order of battle, and were provided with all the instruments used in the destruction of fortified cities. By their incessant labour, a sacred edifice, which towered above the imperial palace, and had long excited the indignation and envy of the gentiles, was in a few hours levelled with the ground."*

On the next day an edict was published, which enacted, that all the churches should be demolished, prohibited the public assemblies of the christians, and denounced death against any who should presume to hold conventicles. The same iniquitous edict authorized a general confiscation of all property belonging to christian societies, and required, that diligent inquisition should be

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. 16. 455.

made for all the sacred books of the christians, and that as many as were found should be burnt with solemn infamy. Many of the bishops and presbyters gave up their books to save their lives, and were branded, by their more stedfast and strenuous brethren, with the reproachful appellation of *traditors* or traitors.

In less than fifteen days after the promulgation of this edict, a fire broke out at two different times in the imperial palace of Nicomedia: the wily adversaries of the christians accused them as the authors of this outrage, while *they* imputed it to the agents of Galerius, who now showed himself capable of concerting or committing any crime of which Nero had set the example. The fears of Dioclesian were greatly alarmed, and he was prevailed on to suspect the christians, numbers of whom were put to death in the most barbarous manner, as conspirators and incendiaries.

“About the same time, there arose certain tumults and seditions in Armenia and in Syria, which were also attributed to the christians by their irreconcilable enemies, and dexterously made use of to arm against them the Emperor's fury. And, accordingly, Dioclesian, by a new edict, ordered all the bishops and ministers of the christian church to be cast into prison. Nor did his inhuman violence end here; for a third edict was soon issued, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of torments should be employed, and the most insupportable punishments invented, to force

these venerable captives to renounce their profession, by sacrificing unto the heathen gods; for it was hoped, that, if the bishops and doctors of the church could be brought to yield, their respective flocks would be easily induced to follow their example.

An immense number of persons, illustriously distinguished by their piety and learning, became the victims of this cruel stratagem, throughout the whole Roman empire, Gaul excepted, which was under the mild and equitable dominion of Constantius Chlorus. Some were punished in such a shameful manner, as the rules of decency oblige us to pass in silence; some were put to death after having had their constancy tried by tedious and inexpressible tortures; and some were sent to the mines to draw out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.”*

It is impossible to say how many thousand Roman subjects were butchered in the course of this persecution; but it is computed, that, not less than seventeen thousand were put to death in one month; and that during the continuance of the persecution, not less than one hundred and fifty thousand persons died by the violence of their persecutors, in the province of Egypt alone, and five times that number, through the fatigues of banishment, or in the public mines to which they were condemned.† “It would be endless to

* Mösheim, Cent. 4, Part I, Chap. I. 316.

† Jones's History of the Waldenses, Vol. 1, 216.

particularize the sufferings of multitudes, recorded by the martyrologists, who braved every torment which the most diabolical malice and insensate cruelty could invent. Humanity recoils at the recital of such atrocities, and turns away, afflicted from the groans of the tortured, and the convulsions of the dying."†

In this disorderly and disgusting state of public affairs, Dioclesian divested himself of the imperial dignity, and retired to a country residence in the neighbourhood of Salona in Dalmatia, where he amused himself with rural occupations, and ended his days in peace.

The unhappy Galerius continued to persecute until his obdurate heart was softened by the long and painful illness which put a period to his life. "The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices. Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner:

† Haweis's Church History, Vol. 1, 269.

“ Among the important cares which have occupied our minds, for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature, the deluded christians, who had renounced the religion and ceremonies of their fathers; and presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions, according to the dictates of their fancy, and had collected a various society from the different provinces of our empire. The edicts which we have published, to enforce the worship of the gods, having exposed many of the christians to danger and distress, many having suffered death, and many more, who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of any public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy men, the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them, therefore, freely to profess their private opinions, and to assemble in their conventicles without fear or molestation, provided always, that they preserve a due respect to the established laws and government. By another rescript we shall signify our intentions to the judges and magistrates; and we hope that our indulgence will engage the christians to offer up their prayers to the Deity whom they adore, for our safety and prosperity, for their own, and that of the republic.—It is not usually

in the language of edicts and manifestoes that we should search for the real character, or the secret motives of princes ; but as these were the words of a dying emperor, his situation, perhaps, may be admitted as a pledge of his sincerity.

When Galerius subscribed this edict of toleration, he was well assured that Licinius would readily comply with the inclinations of his friend and benefactor, and that any measures in favour of the christians would obtain the approbation of Constantine : but the emperor would not venture to insert in the preamble, the name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and who succeeded a few days afterwards to the provinces of Asia. In the first six months, however, of his reign, Maximin affected to adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor ; and though he never condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public edict. Sabinus, his prætorian prefect, addressed a circular letter to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on the imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of those enthusiasts. In consequence of these orders, great numbers of christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries ; and those who had yielded to the violence of the

tempest, solicited, with tears of repentance, their admission into the bosom of the church.

But this treacherous calm was of short duration; nor could the christians of the east place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects, of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favourites of heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted to his most secret councils. They easily convinced him that the christians had been indebted for their victories to their discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified, by order of Maximin; and the officiating priests of the various deities, were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff, destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans, or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate vicegerents of the emperor himself,

A white robe was the ensign of their dignity; and these new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families. By the influence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were obtained, particularly from the cities [of Nicomedia, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully represented the well-known intentions of the court, as the general sense of the people; solicited the emperor to consult the laws of justice, rather than the dictates of clemency; expressed their abhorrence of the christians, and humbly prayed that those impious sectaries might at last be excluded from the limits of their respective territories. The answer of Maximin to the address he obtained from the citizens of Tyre, is still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion, in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on the obstinate impiety of the christians, and betrays, by the readiness with which he consents to their banishment, that he considered himself as receiving, rather than as conferring an obligation. The priests, as well as the magistrates, were empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts, which were engraved on tables of brass; and though it was recommended to them to avoid the effusion of blood, the most cruel and ignominious punishments were inflicted on the refractory christians.

The Asiatic christians had every thing to dread from the severity of a bigoted monarch, who prepared his measures of violence with such deliberate

policy. But a few months had scarcely elapsed, before the edicts published by the western emperors, obliged Maximin to suspend the prosecution of his designs; the civil war which he so rashly undertook against Licinius, employed all his attention, and the defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies.*

The empire was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, and though the emperors were connected by domestic, as well as by public ties, they found occasion for a civil war in less than a year after the death of Maximin. When the battles of Cibalis and Mardia, had thinned the veteran legions, the hostile emperors condescended to adjust their differences by a treaty, which preserved the internal peace of the empire for eight years. In this interval, Constantine added to his military reputation, by spreading the terror of the Roman arms among the Gothic nations. He now became impatient of a partner, and broke his compact with the emperor of the east. The sanguinary battles of Adrianople and Chrysopolis decided the fate of Licinius, and rendered his successful rival sole master of the Roman world.

We are not particularly informed by historians, as to the sentiments of Licinius, on the important subject of religious liberty; but we find that he

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. 16, 473.

joined Constantine, A. D. 313, in an edict of universal toleration, an edict which protected all the subjects of the empire, equally, in the profession of their respective religions. Some writers represent the downfall of paganism, so far as regards the empire, as complete on the death of Maximin; but, if we may believe others, it made its last struggle for life and dominion, under the auspices of Licinius.

“His turbulent spirit,” says Mosheim, “rendered him an enemy to repose; and his natural violence seconded, and still further incensed by the suggestions of the Heathen priests, armed him against Constantine, in the year three hundred and twenty-four, for the second time. During this war, he endeavoured to engage in his cause, all those who remained attached to the ancient superstition, that thus, he might oppress his adversary with numbers; and in order to this he persecuted the christians in a cruel manner, and put to death many of the bishops, after trying them with torments of the most barbarous nature. But all his enterprises proved abortive; for, after several battles fought without success, he was reduced to the necessity of throwing himself at the victor’s feet, and imploring his clemency; which, however, he did not long enjoy, for he was strangled by the orders of Constantine, in the year three hundred and twenty-five. After the death of Licinius, the empire was ruled by Constantine alone, until his death, and the christi-

an cause experienced, in its happy progress, the effects of his auspicious administration. This zealous prince employed all the resources of his genius, all the authority of his laws, and all the engaging charms of his munificence and liberality, to efface, by degrees, the superstitions of paganism, and to propagate christianity in every corner of the Roman empire. He had learned, no doubt, from the disturbances continually excited by Licinius, that neither himself nor the empire could enjoy a fixed state of tranquillity, as long as the ancient superstition subsisted; and therefore, from this period, he openly opposed the sacred rites of paganism, as a religion detrimental to the interests of the state.*

How strange that an ancient and splendid religion, which had so often inspired its votaries with heroic valour and patriotism, that martial and tutelary divinities, whose fabulous attributes had, on many emergencies, raised their worshippers above the ordinary rank of mortals, should now be found *detrimental to the interests of the state*. The splendid military talents and achievements of Constantine, revived the glory of the purple; but his general conduct counteracted the success of his arms, nor did the abolition of paganism and the establishment of christianity arrest, for an instant, the *momentum* of the falling empire.

* Eccles. Hist. Cent. 4, Part 1, Chap 1, 326; see also General History of the World, Vol. 4, 562.

The Roman polytheism, so far as it was connected with the government, was the offspring of policy, and was adapted by the gaiety of its fictions and shows, to divert the mind, and by the convenient ambiguity of its oracles, to serve the state. If Constantine wanted a religion, adapted to mingle, without sustaining any injury, with political institutions, and to promote schemes of policy and aggrandizement, the one he left, was more eligible than the one he embraced.

But it is natural and obvious to ask, Was the conduct of the emperor in reference to christianity, determined chiefly by reasons of state; or, what sentiments does it appear that he entertained, as to the divine original and authority of that religion of which he became so powerful a patron! Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*,* mentions four things as conducing to his conversion; first, reflections on the futility of idols, and the calamities which had befallen their worshippers; secondly, a luminous cross which appeared in the sky, with the inscription, *By this overcome*; thirdly, a vision, in which Christ appeared to him, and directed him to carry the figure of the cross in his standards; and fourthly, the instruction of christian priests.

To writers, however, who think it necessary to collate the actions of Constantine, with the encomiums of his episcopal panegyrist, the nature,

* Book 1, Chaps. 21, 22, 23, and 26.

the time and the circumstances of his conversion to christianity, are matters of doubtful speculation. Doctor Haweis is of opinion that "nothing in the whole life of Constantine discovers a trace of real conversion to God," but that on the contrary, "the whole tenor of his life, except favouring the bishops, building churches, enriching them with wealth and finery, and other very equivocal marks of christianity, displays no trait of a christian character."*

"During the whole course of his reign," says Gibbon, "the stream of christianity flowed with a gentle, though accelerated motion: but its general direction, was sometimes checked, and sometimes diverted, by the accidental circumstances of the times, or by the prudence, or possibly, by the caprice of the monarch.

His ministers were permitted to signify the intentions of their master, in the various language which was best adapted to their respective principles; and he artfully balanced the hopes and fears of his subjects, by publishing in the same year two edicts; the first of which enjoined the solemn observance of Sunday, and the second directed the regular consultation of haruspices. While this important revolution yet remained in suspense, the christians and the pagans watched the conduct of their sovereign with the same anxiety, but with very opposite sentiments. The

* Church History, Vol. 1, 278.

former were prompted by every motive of zeal, as well as by vanity, to exaggerate the marks of his favour, and the evidences of his faith. The latter, until their just apprehensions were changed into despair and resentment, attempted to conceal from the world, and from themselves, that the gods of Rome could no longer reckon the emperor in the number of their votaries. The same passions and prejudices have engaged the partial writers of the times, to connect the public profession of christianity, with the most glorious, or the most ignominious æra of the reign of Constantine.

Whatever symptoms of christian piety might transpire in the discourses or actions of Constantine, he persevered until he was near forty years of age, in the practice of the established religion ; and the same conduct, which in the court of Nicomedia might be imputed to his fear, could be ascribed only to the inclination or policy of the sovereign of Gaul. His liberality restored and enriched the temples of the gods ; the medals which issued from his imperial mint are impressed with the figures of Jupiter and Apollo, of Mars and Hercules ; and his filial piety increased the council of Olympus, by the solemn apotheosis of his father Constantius. But the devotion of Constantine was more peculiarly directed to the genius of the Sun, the Apollo of Greek and Roman mythology ; and he was pleased to be represented with the symbols of the god of light

and poetry. The unerring shafts of that deity, the brightness of his eyes, his laurel wreath, immortal beauty, and elegant accomplishments, seem to point him out as the patron of a young hero. The altars of Apollo were crowned with the votive offerings of Constantine, and the credulous multitude were taught to believe, that the emperor was permitted to behold, with mortal eyes, the visible majesty of their tutelar deity; and that either waking or in a vision, he was blessed with the auspicious omens of a long and victorious reign. The sun was universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine; and the pagans might reasonably expect that the insulted god would pursue, with unrelenting vengeance, the impiety of his ungrateful favourite.

As long as Constantine exercised a limited sovereignty over the provinces of Gaul, his christian subjects were protected by the authority, and perhaps by the laws of a prince who wisely left to the gods, the care of vindicating their own honour.*

“ It is not indeed easy, nor perhaps possible, to fix the time, when the religious sentiments of Constantine were so far changed, as to render all religions, but that of Christ, the objects of his aversion. All that we know, with certainty, concerning this matter is, that this change was first pub-

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. 20, 239.

lished to the world by the laws and edicts which this emperor issued out in the year three hundred and twenty-four, when, after the defeat and death of Licinius, he reigned without a colleague, sole lord of the Roman empire. His designs, however, with respect to the abolition of the ancient religion of the Romans, and the tolerating no other form of worship but the christian, were only made known towards the latter end of his life, by the edicts he issued out for destroying the heathen temples, and prohibiting sacrifices.

The sincerity of Constantine's zeal for christianity can scarcely be doubted, unless it be maintained, that the outward actions of men, are in no degree a proof of their inward sentiments.

It must indeed be confessed, that the life and actions of this prince were not such as the christian religion demands from those who profess to believe its sublime doctrines. It is also certain, that from his conversion to the last period of his life, he continued in the state of a *catechumen*, and was not received by baptism into the number of the faithful, until a few days before his death, when that sacred rite was administered to him at Nicomedia, by Eusebius, bishop of that place."*

Mosheim, Cent. 4, part 1, Chap. 1, 321.—Whatever doubts may rest upon the conversion of Constantine as to the *ubi, quando*, and *quomodo*, it is pretty certain that its effects were not what we could wish they had been. "He pursued the great object of his ambition through the dark and bloody paths of war and policy; and after the victory, he abandoned himself, without moderation, to the

There is one indubitable circumstance which goes far towards rendering credible the otherwise suspicious narrative of Eusebius, respecting the miraculous cross. Prior to the reign of Constantine,

abuse of his fortune. Instead of asserting his just superiority above the imperfect heroism and prophane philosophy of Trajan and the Antonines, the mature age of Constantine forfeited the reputation which he had acquired in his youth. As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he proportionably declined in the practice of virtue; and the same year of his reign in which he convened the council of Nice, was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son. This date is alone sufficient to refute the ignorant and malicious suggestions of Zosimus, who affirms, that after the death of Crispus, the remorse of his father accepted from the ministers of christianity the expiation which he had vainly solicited from the pagan pontiffs. At the time of the death of Crispus, the emperor could no longer hesitate in the choice of a religion; he could no longer be ignorant that the church was possessed of an infallible remedy, though he chose to defer the application of it, until the approach of death had removed the temptation and danger of a relapse. The bishops, whom he summoned in his last illness to the palace of Nicomedia, were edified by the fervour with which he requested and received the sacrament of baptism, by the solemn protestation that the remainder of his life should be worthy of a disciple of Christ, and by his humble refusal to wear the imperial purple after he had been clothed in the white garment of a neophyte. The example and reputation of Constantine seemed to countenance the delay of baptism. Future tyrants were encouraged to believe, that the innocent blood which they might shed in a long reign would instantly be washed away in the waters of regeneration; and the abuse of religion dangerously undermined the foundations of moral virtue." *Decline and Fall*, Chap. 20, 272.

The death of Crispus, who it would seem was a virtuous and accomplished prince, and that of the empress Fausta, whose character

the *cross* was the emblem of guilt, pain, and ignominy; this was the necessary consequence of its being the instrument of condign punishment to the lowest and vilest malefactors. During the reign of Constantine, the *cross* became the symbol of honour, conquest, and safety. What could have induced this emperor, who was a consummate general, to emblazon among his military ensigus, a figure so disgusting as that of the cross must have been to the eyes of Roman soldiers! Some miracle must have been wrought, or some mighty revolution have taken place. "The cross glittered on the helmets of the soldiers, was engraved on their shields, was interwoven into their banners, and the consecrated emblems which adorned the person of the emperor himself, were distinguished only by the richer materials, and more exquisite workmanship. But the principal standard which displayed the triumph of the cross, was styled the *Labarum*, an obscure, though celebrated name, which has been vainly

is somewhat doubtful, are involved in extreme obscurity. But it is too manifest to be denied, that the general tenor of Constantine's reign was oppressive and disastrous; and that the excessive praises of Eusebius are to be considered for the most part, as the flimsy and swollen encomiums of a courtly parasite.

The reign of Constantine might be a golden age to the orthodox bishops; but it was an iron one to those unhappy parents who were induced, by the public distress, to forego the feelings of nature, and expose their new born infants. This distress was occasioned chiefly by the pressure of taxes; an evil not likely to be lightened by lavishing the revenues of the state in the endowment of a Church.

derived from almost all the languages of the world. It is described as a long pike intersected by a transversal beam. The silken veil which hung down from the beam was curiously entwrought with the images of the reigning monarch and his children. The summit of the pike supported a crown of gold, which inclosed the mysterious monogram at once expressive of the figure of the cross, and the initial letters of the name of Christ. The safety of the *Labarum* was entrusted to fifty guards, of approved valour and fidelity; their station was marked by honours and emoluments, and some fortunate accidents soon introduced an opinion, that as long as the guards of the *Labarum* were engaged in the execution of their office, they were secure and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy.*

Long before the imperial throne was filled by Constantine, the inventive genius of superstition had discovered mysteries in the figure of the cross, of which the apostle Paul would have been ashamed. It is not improbable, that these wild rhapsodies of allegory and mysticism, spreading from the east to the west, had silently prepared the way for the elevation of the cross among the warlike trophies of the Roman world. "Consider," says Justin Martyr, "all the things in the world, whether they could be administered, or have any communication with each other, without the form of

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. chap xx. 256.

the cross. The sea could not be passed, unless that trophy called a sail, were preserved in the ship; the earth could not be tilled without it; for neither diggers nor artificers could do their work, but by instruments of this kind." And why for the same reasons, should not the powerful magic of this figure, be as efficacious to conquer an army, as to subdue the sea and the dry land?

This thought did not escape our learned expositor, who declares, that the *gift* of expounding the holy scriptures was granted to him by the special grace of God; for he observes, "that when the son of Nun, called Jesus, led the people on to battle, Moses employed himself in prayer, with his hands stretched out in the form of the cross; that as long as he continued in that posture, Amalek was beaten; but when he remitted any thing of it, his own people suffered; and all this was owing to the power of the cross: for the people did not conquer because Moses prayed, but because, while the name of *Jesus* was at the head of the battle, Moses was exhibiting the figure of the *cross*.*

* Middleton's Free Inquiry, 28—The following sentence is a remarkable instance of that mistaken ingenuity in explaining or rather torturing the scriptures which Justin ascribes to inspiration. "The form of man differs in nothing else from other animals, but in the erection of his body, and the extension of his arms, and the projection of his nose from the forehead, through which respiration is made, and which shows nothing else but the figure of the cross: in which sense also it is spoken by the prophet, *Christ the Lord is the breath before our face*."

We despair of the improvement of those on whose hearts no salutary impression is made by the awful displays of the divine justice and mercy given in the cross of Christ. When we observe with what ease and dexterity men have perverted all communications of the will of God, and rendered them subservient to sordid and sinister purposes, all hope, that the human species will generally speaking, be rendered wise and virtuous by religion, seems vain, except such as is supported by the consideration, that to omnipotence the most difficult things are possible, and that we are warranted, by the sure word of prophecy, to expect a period, when *righteousness shall look down from heaven and truth spring out of the earth.**

The recollection that the Son of God, moved with infinite pity and compassion, died an ignominious death on the cross, to redeem them from all iniquity, stimulated the first christians *to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*† God forbid, says the apostle of the gentiles, *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*‡ But when the gospel became the religion of the empire, the warfare which had subsisted between the cross and the world was amicably adjusted; and men, laden with the superstition, avarice, and ambition of the pagan world,

* Psalm lxxxv. 11.

† Titus, ii. 12.

‡ Gal. vi. 14.

rallied around the cross, as the centre of union, and the signal for action.

Constantine had the honour, if an honour it was, to give reality and importance to the fantastic visions of enthusiasm, and to associate, by the solemnity of laws and constitutions, the cross of the Prince of Peace, with the sword of magistracy, of war and of conquest; and on many occasions, since the ashes of this emperor mingled with common dust, the cross and the sword have been faithful and active companions in guilt. At this time a new government, or rather tyranny, was rising on the basis of the cross. The bishops wisely judged that the occasional aid of the sword might be necessary to the defence of their divine rights and prerogatives, against the audacious attacks of infidels and heretics. The cross was all their own; but on some occasions, its profound and ample mysteries might furnish powerful and timely assistance to the imperial designs; hence it was the obvious interest of the bishops and emperor to contract a sacred alliance, and to unite their resources. The former could not despair of succeeding in any controversy, when the power of argument, and the fascination of eloquence, were seconded by the energy of the sword; nor could the latter fear to encounter any adversary, however formidable, when his veteran legions had opened to them a new path to conquest and glory, by the divine virtue of the victorious cross.

Heretics and infidels, in subsequent ages, found,

that by refusing to pay homage to the cross, they exposed themselves to the vengeance of the sword, and their blood often flowed, in copious streams, as an acceptable libation to the God of mercy and grace.

What an edifying spectacle did this junction of the sword and the cross present in the Crusades, when Europe, summoned by the shrill clarion of fanaticism, disgorged her frantic population into the plains of Asia, there to spread the contagion of their vices, and to raise an eternal monument of their folly. Happily for the peace of the world, and for the honour of human nature, the inspiration which kindled the Holy Wars has long since died away; but the cross and the sword still continue, with amicable concord, to administer the grim orgies of despotism, and to sway the sceptre of intolerance in the stygian court of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER V.

Reflections on the establishment of christianity by Constantine the Great, and on the obvious and necessary consequences of connecting secular rewards with the profession of religious truths, or secular penalties with their rejection.

ALL which has been said, or can be said, *for or against*, on the subject of religious liberty, converges to a point on the question of religious establishments. In any country where the civil government is just and vigorous, and where the sole business of the magistrate is to administer justice and preserve the peace; intolerance cannot exist, or if it does exist, cannot operate.

It is a mistaken opinion, that a religion of some kind established by law is essential to the existence and stability of civil government. Were this proposition true, there would be an end of the controversy: for government is essential to society, and society to the wellbeing of the human race. Government is necessary; religion, even as to this life, is useful, but to blend them together, is neither necessary nor useful; but on the contrary, is alike detrimental to the incorruptness and efficacy of each. What Sir Francis Bacon says of philosophy and religion, is applicable to

church and state, viz. "that the junction of the two is prejudicial to both."

The making of laws and constitutions is in the first instance a matter of mere speculation: experience may demonstrate the inutility or bad tendency of some laws, which, before brought to that test, seemed good and promised to be useful. "The experience of the Greek and Roman history could not inform the world, how far the system of national manners might be reformed and improved, by the precepts of a divine revelation; and Constantine might listen with some confidence to the flattering, and indeed reasonable assurances of Lactantius. The eloquent apologist seemed firmly to expect, and almost ventured to promise, that the establishment of christianity would restore the innocence and felicity of the primitive age; that the worship of the true God would extinguish war and dissension among those who mutually considered themselves as the children of a common parent; that every impure desire, every angry and selfish passion, would be restrained by the knowledge of the gospel, and that the magistrates might sheath the sword of justice among a people, who would be universally actuated by the sentiments of truth and piety, of equity and moderation, of harmony and universal love."* The advent of the Saviour of sinners was celebrated in the angelic anthem—" *Glory to God*

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap 20, 246.

in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men. Righteousness, saith the prophet, foretelling the peaceable state of Christ's kingdom, shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins; the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. Had all the subjects of the empire cordially embraced the gospel of Christ, *old things would have passed away, and all things become new; the warriors would have beaten their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.*† But the establishment of christianity by Constantine, was so far from realizing these delightful prospects, that it opened new sources of pride, oppression, and discord. Since that memorable epocha, civil government has been obstructed and embarrassed more by the rival demands of secular and ecclesiastical power, than by any other cause of contention. Nor can it be denied that christianity remained for ages so completely established, and could by means of violence, so easily crush its adversaries, that it became the most loathsome object imaginable.

The glorious dispensations of God's grace, so well adapted to enlighten and renovate the minds of sinners, was, by its alliance with courts and armies, so thoroughly secularized and suited to the

† Luke, ii. 14.—Isaiah, xi. 5, 6.—2 Cor. v. 17.—Isaiah, ii. 4.

lusts and follies of a world immersed in ignorance and superstition, that it became a fruitful source of vicious abominations.

Genuine christianity acknowledges no dominion but that of Christ,—no power but the power of reason and persuasion, the fear of future punishment, and the hope of future happiness: it must therefore, necessarily be corrupted, before it can receive a political establishment.

It is not the duty of civil rulers as such, to provide a religion for their subjects, nor yet to punish them for their want of it. If a magistrate chooses to promote religion by instruction and entreaty, he offers no violence to its nature, and ought to be esteemed for his labours; but the moment he enforces his instructions by magisterial authority, he shows his want of better information. Obedience to the legal enactments of secular power, is all that our rulers, have a right to expect from us: when they intermeddle in matters of conscience and private judgment, they go beyond the sphere of their proper jurisdiction.

Human laws take cognizance of nothing more than the overt act; the internal springs of action are neither tangible nor visible to them. Our laws require that we should obey our rulers, but it would be preposterous for them to require that we should obey from motives of love. The scripture requires us to *honour* the king, but it requires us to *love* the Lord our God with all our heart, and as the heart is transparent to him, the affectation of what is not

there, can be of no avail, except to expose us to the doom of the hypocrite. Even under the law of Moses, which was much less spiritual than the the gospel of Christ, the outward and visible sign did not avail, without the inward and spiritual grace. The former may be established by liturgies and acts of the legislature ; but when established, and decorated with all the pomp and glory of the world, it is no more religion than a lifeless body is a living man.

“ Lay christianity before me who will,” says a lively and ingenious writer, “ I expect to find three things in it, which I call analogy, proportion and perfection. Each of these articles opens a wide field of not incurious speculation, and each fully explained and applied, would serve to guide any man in his choice of a religion, yea, in his choice of a party among the various divisions of christians. By *analogy*, I mean resemblance ; and when I say a revealed religion must bring along with it analogical evidence, I mean, it must resemble the just dictates of nature. The reason is plain. The same Supreme Being is the author of both. The God of nature has formed man for observing objects, comparing them together, laying down principles, inferring consequences, reasoning and self-determining ; he has not only empowered all mankind to exercise these abilities, but he has even constrained them by a necessity of nature to do so ; he has not only rendered it impossible for men to excel without this exercise, but

he has even rendered it impossible for them to exist safely in society without it. In a word, the God of nature has made man in his own image, a self-determining being, and to say nothing of the nature of virtue, he has rendered free consent essential to every man's felicity and peace. With his own consent, subjection makes him happy ; without it, dominion over the universe would make him miserable.

The religion of nature, (I mean by this expression here, the objects which display the nature of the Deity, and thereby discover the obligations of mankind,) is in perfect harmony with the natural constitution of man. All natural objects offer evidence to all, but force it on none. A man may examine it, and he may not examine it ; he may admit it, and he may reject it ; and if his rejection of the evidence of natural religion be not expressed in such overt acts as are injurious to the peace of civil society, no man is empowered to force him or to punish him ; the supreme moral Governor of the world himself does not distinguish him here, by any exterior punishments ; at most he expresses his displeasure by marks attached to the person of the culprit, and concealed from all the rest of his fellow-creatures ; and the glory of civil society is not to encroach on the moral government of God.

Christianity comes, or pretends to come, from the God of nature ; I look for analogy, and I find it ; but I find it in the holy scriptures, the first

teachers, and the primitive churches. In all these, I am considered as a rational creature; objects are proposed, evidence is offered: if I admit it, I am not entitled thereby to any temporal emoluments; if I refuse it, I am not subjected to any temporal punishments: the whole is an affair of conscience, and lies between each individual and his God. I choose to be a christian on this very account. This freedom, which I call the perfection of my nature; this self-determination, the dignity of my species, the essence of my natural virtue; this I do not forfeit by becoming a christian; this I retain, explained, confirmed, directed, assisted by the regal grant of the Son of God. Thus the prerogatives of Christ, the laws of his religion, and the natural rights of mankind, being analogous, evidence arises of the divinity of the religion of Jesus.

I believe, it would be very easy to prove, that the christianity of the church of Rome, and that of every other establishment, because they are establishments, is totally destitute of this analogy. The religion of nature is not capable of establishment,—the religion of Jesus Christ is not capable of establishment: if the religion of any church be capable of establishment, it is not analogous to that of scripture, or that of nature. A very simple example may explain our meaning. Natural religion requires a man to pay a mental homage to the Deity, to venerate his perfections, by adoring and confiding in them. By what possible

means can these pious operations of the mind be established? could they be forced, their nature would be destroyed, and they would cease to be piety, which is an exercise of judgment and will. Revealed religion requires man to pay a mental homage to the Deity through Jesus Christ, to venerate his perfections, by adoring and confiding in them as christianity directs; by repentance, by faith, by hope, and so on. How is it possible to establish these spiritual acts? A human establishment requires man to pay his christian mental homage to the Deity, by performing some external ceremony, suppose bowing to the east. The ceremony, we grant, may be established: but the voluntary exercise of the soul in the performance, which is essential to the christianity of the action, who in the world can establish this? If the religion of Jesus be considered as consisting of external rites and internal dispositions, the former may be established: but, be it remembered, the establishment of the exterior not only does not establish the interior, but the destruction of the last, is previously essential to the establishment of the first.

No religion can be established without penal sanctions, and all penal sanctions in cases of religion, are persecutions. Before a man can persecute, he must renounce the generous tolerant dispositions of a christian. No religion can be established without human creeds; and subscription to all human creeds implies two dispositions.

contrary to true religion, and both expressly forbidden by the author of it. These two dispositions are, love of dominion over conscience in the imposer, and an abject preference of slavery in the subscriber. The first usurps the rights of Christ; the last swears allegiance to a pretender. The first domineers, and gives laws like a tyrant; the last truckles like a vassal. The first assumes a dominion incompatible with his frailty, impossible even to his dignity, yea denied even to the dignity of angels; the last yields a low submission, inconsistent with his own dignity, and ruinous to that very religion, which he pretends by this means to support. Jesus Christ does not require, he does not allow, yea he expressly forbids both these dispositions, well knowing, that an allowance of these, would be a suppression of the finest dispositions of the human soul, and a degrading of revelation, beneath the religion of nature. If human inventions have formerly secularized christianity, and rendered such bad dispositions necessary in times of ignorance, they ought to be exploded now, as all christians now allow this theory:—The Son of God did not come to redeem one part of mankind, to serve the secular views and unworthy passions of the other: but he obtained freedom for both, that both *might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of their lives.* When churches reduce this theory to practice, they realize, in actual life, what otherwise makes only a fine idea decyphered

in books, and by so doing they adorn their christianity with the glorious evidence of analogy.*

To judge correctly of the fitness of associating a christian church with a political government, we should attend to what ought to be the constitution of such a society. The several churches, of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles, were voluntary associations, cemented by faith in Christ—a principle which does not require, and which if it did, could not receive, the assistance of secular power.

The church of Christ is his kingdom, and his kingdom is not of this world, but is wholly spiritual and heavenly, both as to its laws and objects. It is not in the power of all the soldiers, kings, and priests in the world to make any man, woman, or child, a subject of Christ's kingdom; for to become such, we must be born *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. The highest authority in the world declares, that *except a man is born of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. Let those who presume to put themselves at the head of christian societies, and to exercise authority, as generals over their forces, first show their ability to control the winds of heaven; for, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whi-*

* Robinson's Translation of Saurin's Sermons, Preface to the third Volume, second Edition, 10, 1734.

*ther it goeth, so is every one that is born of the spirit. The true church is a piece of divine architecture, raised upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.**

This passage specifies, with clearness and precision, the grand object of the discipline of Christ's house. The same is written, as with a sunbeam, in every book of the new testament; where doctrines, precepts, and promises, conspire to restrain believers from the debasing follies and pollutions of an evil world, and to accelerate their progress in christian knowledge and purity. Christianity, as it appears in the ministry of Christ and his apostles, is distinguished by its simplicity and energy, stands aloof from the jargon of mysticism, from the devices of avarice, and the conceits of superstition; and is attended with a noble elevation of character, and a truly masculine piety, consisting in the love of truth, in the fear of God, and in the practice of universal rectitude. The *sacred leaven* spreads, and under its influence, the great become humble, the idle active, the rich liberal, the voluptuous temperate, and the dishonest just.

It not unfrequently happens that the dissolute and vicious, by reforming their manners, promote

* John i. 13, iii. 5-8. — Ephes. ii. 20, 21.

their fortunes, and this advantage may happen to those reformed by christian truth, as well as to those reclaimed by other considerations; but the discipline of Christ's kingdom is mainly directed to the promotion of the moral excellence, and not the temporal aggrandizement of his subjects; its aim is not the fading honours of time, but the lasting glories of eternity.

A *Regius* professor of divinity makes the following remarks on this subject. "The christian church is a spiritual society. This will plainly appear by considering,

First, that it was founded in opposition to the kingdom of darkness. This is plainly implied in our blessed Saviour's words to St. Peter: Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The devil being cast out of heaven for his ambition to be like the most High, erected a kingdom in these lower regions. Hence he is called the prince of this world,† and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.‡ The instruments whereby he subdues mankind are *sin* and *death*, which are also said to reign and to have kingdoms. In order to destroy these kingdoms, the Son of God came into the world, and there erected his kingdom, which is often opposed to the kingdom of the devil.

* Matthew, xvi. 18

† John, xii. 31.

‡ Ephes. ii. 2.

Secondly, the kingdom, or church of Christ, was by the design of its foundation, to be distinct from all earthly kingdoms, which is a plain consequence from the last particular, that it is founded in opposition to the kingdom of darkness; because the kingdoms of this world are designed for men's temporal welfare and happiness; and for the security of their lives and properties against fraud and violence."*

In as much as detachment from this world, and preparation for the world to come, is the grand object to which the maxims and discipline of the kingdom of Christ are directed, no reasons can be assigned for its junction with governments which originate, act, and end, in this world, except such as are suggested by earthly policy.

Those who blend christianity with political institutions, and with the pompous formalities of the world, would seem to attempt falsifying that memorable declaration of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world." The church of Christ is his kingdom. The rewards by which his subjects are animated to obedience, are all comprised in the glory yet to be revealed; and the terrors held out to intimidate and abash his enemies, are the terrors of the future world.

As a christian church is a religious society, it has no right to number among its friends, any, except such as are devoted to it from principles of religion.

* Potter's Discourse of Church-Government, Chap. i. 19. 1711.

Associating the wealth and splendour of government with the doctrines and morals of the gospel, obscures and enfeebles the proofs of their divine authority, without increasing their number. Of what advantage is the civil and military strength of a kingdom to a church, except it be to enable it to gain conquests by force, where it cannot obtain them by persnasion; and of what advantage are great revenues, unless to purchase friends, or in other words, to purchase infamy and ruin, by buying such as are base enough to sell themselves? We degrade the sublime character of Christ's dominion, when we call to its aid such succours, as human establishments require.

It is justly observed by William Alexander, that "since temporal honours and pecuniary emoluments are lures and baits, which attract the greedy attention of worldly minds, and since such can mould their consciences to any profession to obtain their desires, it follows, that whatever church, or religious profession, is united to the state, labours under very great disadvantages and temptations to insincerity, peculiar to its situation, and inseparably connected with every union of hierarchy with civil government."*

There is no device by which men have amassed wealth with so little trouble, or risen to authority with so little merit, as by means of established churches. Art, industry, and enterprise, are the

* Christian Discipline.

legitimate sources of wealth; and men who seek it by such means, serve their country, at the same time that they please themselves, and promote the comfort of their families. If a society which is formed for the promotion of moral virtue, or even political prosperity, has honours to bestow, common sense dictates, that they ought to be bestowed so as to reward and encourage integrity, talent, and assiduity. The obvious principles of common sense and common equity have been, and still are, flagrantly violated by churches, which raise ample revenues under the pretence of supporting *religion*.

If the establishing of a religion in a nation were tantamount to making the nation religious, who could object to it? *Righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a reproach to any people.* Can any one doubt, but that temperance, industry, and uprightness, are more conducive to national strength and riches, than profligacy, indolence and rapine? But many established religions have been decidedly inimical to good morals, have favoured ignorance, servility, and superstition, and have made the essence of virtue to consist in the payment of tithes, and in the performance of idle and ridiculous ceremonies, useless to the heart, and insulting to the understanding, of man.

When we object to the establishment of christianity, it is not that we doubt its being founded in truth, conducive to happiness, and worthy of being universally received. And when we collate

and compare the various religions of the world, in order to judge of their comparative worth, we find one strong and pregnant proof of the divine original and superior excellence of christianity, in its averseness to any coalition with the swords and cabinets of princes. It stands in virgin purity aloof from the defiling contact of state policy and secular violence.

The several religions established by ancient legislators, were, in some respects, instruments of government; in others, means of recreation, and in others, sources of emolument; they were all founded on traditionary tales, fictions, and fables, and some of their rites were excessively licentious, and others exceedingly sanguinary. It is true, most of them had certain mysteries, in which it is supposed, the immortality and transmigration of the soul were taught; but as the initiated were forbid to tell, we are not able to learn, what was taught; whether the nature of the soul, the system of the world, the secrets of fate, or the deep things of philosophy and politics; and it is not improbable, whatever was taught or exhibited, that the ultimate object of the mysteries was, to give an imposing air to religion, and make it the more entertaining to the people and the more profitable to the priest.

Christianity, as contained in the New Testament, carries a very friendly aspect as to just and good government, and wherever it prevails, will render such governments important services; but

this it will do far more effectually standing alone, than by being associated with them. There are two respects in which christianity assists government and social order; first, by encouraging good morals in general; and secondly, by encouraging such morals in particular, as have an immediate connexion with obedience to the ruling powers. In the first instance, it not only restrains from crimes, which if committed, the magistrate must pursue with proportionate punishment, and after all, might not be able to repair the injury done by them; but it softly and powerfully disposes to virtues, which it would be preposterous for the magistrate to enjoin, and which notwithstanding are of the utmost advantage to society. In the second instance, it inculcates obedience, not merely as a matter of fear or interest, but as a matter of conscience, and as a branch of allegiance to the Supreme Ruler.

If a church, formed according to the laws and precedents of the New Testament, admits of no head but Christ; and if under him, all members of the fellowship are *brethren*, among whom, the most humble are the most dignified, and the most useful, the most honourable; we must consider those arrangements which took place in the latter part of Constantine's reign, as subversive of the true order and constitution of christian churches.

Of the many and complicated evils which were permanently connected with the christian profession in the golden days of Constantine, we shall advert to a few, which are nearly allied to our subject.

First, the emperor and the bishops assumed to themselves, and conferred on each other, powers and functions to which they were not entitled.

“It was long since established, as a fundamental maxim of the Roman constitution, that every rank of citizens were alike subject to the laws, and that the care of religion was the right as well as the duty of the civil magistrate. Constantine and his successors *could not easily persuade themselves that they had forfeited, by their conversion, any branch of the imperial prerogatives, or that they were incapable of giving laws to a religion which they had protected and embraced.* The emperors still continued to exercise a supreme jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical order; and the sixteenth book of the Theodosian code, represents, under a variety of titles, the authority which they assumed in the government of the catholic church.”*

“The bishops themselves, whose opulence and authority were considerably increased since the reign of Constantine, began to introduce gradually innovations into the forms of ecclesiastical discipline, and to change the ancient government of the church. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the people from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards, they by degrees divested even the presbyters of their ancient privileges and their primitive authority,

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. xx. 278.

that they might have no importunate protestors to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings; and principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that at the conclusion of this century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges, which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops; and many of the rights, which had been formerly vested in the universal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to subordinate officers and magistrates.

Constantine the Great, in order to prevent civil commotions, and to fix his authority upon solid and stable foundations, made several changes, not only in the laws of the empire, but also in the form of the Roman government. And as there were many important reasons, *which induced him to suit the administration of the church to these changes in the civil constitution, this necessarily introduced, among the bishops, new degrees of eminence and rank.* Three prelates had, before this, enjoyed a certain degree of pre-eminence over the rest of the episcopal order, viz. the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; and to these, the bishop of Constantinople was added, when the imperial residence was transferred to that city. These four prelates answered to the four prætorian prefects created by Constantine; and it is possible,

that in this very century, they were distinguished by the Jewish title, Patriarchs. After these followed the *Exarchs*, who had the inspection over several provinces, and answered to the appointment of certain civil officers who bore the same title. In a lower class, were the Metropolitans, who had only the government of one province, under whom were the Archbishops, whose inspection was confined to certain districts. In this gradation, the bishops brought up the rear; their authority was not in all places equally extensive; being in some considerably ample, and in others confined within narrow limits. To these various ecclesiastical orders, we might add that of the *Chorepiscopi*, or superintendents of the country churches: but this order was, in most places, suppressed by the bishops, with a design to extend their own authority, and enlarge the sphere of their power and jurisdiction.

The administration of the church was divided by Constantine himself into an external and an internal inspection. The latter, which was committed to the bishops and councils, related to religious controversies, the forms of divine worship, the vices of the ecclesiastical orders, &c. The external administration of the church, the emperor assumed to himself. This comprehended all those things that relate to the outward state and discipline of the church; it likewise extended to all contests and debates that should arise between the ministers of the church, superior as well as

inferior, concerning their possessions, their reputation, their rights and privileges, their offences against the laws, and things of a like nature; but no controversies that related to matters purely religious, were cognizable by this external inspection. In consequence of this artful division of the ecclesiastical government, Constantine and his successors called councils, presided in them, appointed the judges of religious controversies, terminated the differences which arose between the bishops and the people, fixed the limits of the ecclesiastical provinces, took cognizance of the civil causes, that subsisted between the ministers of the church, and punished the crimes committed against the laws, by the ordinary judges appointed for that purpose; giving over all causes purely ecclesiastical to the cognizance of bishops and councils. But this famous division of the administration of the church was never explained with perspicuity, nor determined with a sufficient degree of accuracy and precision; so that both in this and the following centuries, we find many transactions that seem absolutely inconsistent with it. We find the emperors, for example, frequently determining matters purely ecclesiastical, and that belonged to the internal jurisdiction of the church; and on the other hand, nothing is more frequent than the decisions of bishops and councils concerning things that relate merely to the external form and government of the church.”*

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. 4, Part 2, 348—” But that which most notably set up this swelling and degenerate prelacy, was the

The juvenile reader will do well to imprint on his memory this remark of our learned historian, or he may be often induced to give himself fruitless trouble. The fact is, that the performance of in-

mistaken zeal of Constantine, together with his policy, and the ambition of christians and bishops who were thereby gratified. For as Constantine perceived that the christians were his surest strength, and that if he owned them, they would unanimously own him, and be constant to him, so also his judgment and zeal for christianity concurred with his interest and policy; and as all the secular and military rulers depended on him for honour and power, throughout the Roman world, he thought it not seemly to give the chief christians who were the bishops, less honour than he did to the heathens, and to common men; nor did he think meet to deny to the christian churches such privileges, as might set them somewhat higher than his other subjects.

The christians having stated that the power of arbitrating their civil differences was in the bishop alone, it grew presently to be accounted a heinous crime or scandal, for any christians to go to law before the civil magistrate. And Constantine finding them in possession of this custom confirmed and enlarged it by an edict, which decreed that all bishops should be judges in all causes among the christians, and that no civil judge or magistrate should compel any christian to his bar.—And the canons so deterred christians from seeking justice from the civil judicatures that they had few but heathens to be judges of. Yea the christians thought so hardly of the judges themselves (for punishing men with the sword, when the bishops even for murder itself punished them but with penance) that they doubted sometimes whether those christians who exercised magistracy or civil judgment after baptism, were not therefore to be taken for sinners." *Abridged from Baxter, on Episcopacy, 19, 20.*

Who does not perceive that the result of those arrangements by which christianity was established was, the perversion of justice, the corruption of religion, and the rendering strong and permanent,

ternal and external functions in reference to the church, were two parts of a drama which the emperor and the bishops were acting for their mutual benefit, and as expert *dramatis personæ*, they changed sides just as occasion required. The bishops were invested with supreme power in all matters purely spiritual, and in the exercise of this power, they endeavoured to cut off the victims of their displeasure, not only from the advantages of church-fellowship, but also from those of civil society; they were entitled to supreme dominion in things spiritual; and therefore they claimed for themselves an independent jurisdiction in things temporal, and sat in judgment upon lands and cattle, and gold and silver. Was there any thing more spiritual in an act of fornication or adultery committed by a bishop, than in the same act committed by any other person? and yet it was conceded that they should be their own judges in such cases; and so extensive was the indulgence of the emperor, that he declared in the council of Nice, that if he chanced to surprise a bishop in such an act, he would cover him with his imperial mantle. He who reads certain controversies on the rights of the christian church, and on the rights of christian princes, must not be surprised, if he finds as much perplexity among the disputants as amongst the historians.

abuses which otherwise would probably have been feeble and fugitive ?

It is not my design, by what I have here said or quoted, to assail "the strong holds and commanding heights of episcopacy," but to shew, that it had been much better for the christian religion, if it had been merely tolerated and not established, if its professors had been allowed equal liberty, without being invested with pre-eminent power; an opinion that will appear with additional evidence, when it is shown,

Secondly, that the emperor and the bishops employed means to suppress paganism and propagate christianity, which were irreligious, unjust and dishonourable.

The edict of Milan, was in perfect unison with every principle of sound religion and political justice; it secured alike to pagans and christians, the undisturbed enjoyment of their religious professions, and the peaceable possession of whatever property belonged to their temples or churches; it created no civil differences between them, nor gave to either any advantage over the other, but left them to carry on their spiritual warfare with the bloodless and appropriate weapons of *knowledge, persuasion, and example*. We cannot but regret that the emperor ever saw occasion to violate an edict so fraught with wisdom and equity, which reflected so much honour on the first years of his reign, and which was so well adapted to give free scope and play, to the genuine energies of the gospel. We justly exult in the progress of primitive christianity; the appendages of pomp

and power had not concealed its real, by conferring on it an adventitious splendor; but it stood forth before the eyes of the nations on the basis of its divine original, and prevailed by the simplicity of its institutions, and the potency of its truth. It did not smooth its way by any condescending compliances with the errors and vices of those who were disposed to embrace it; but peremptorily required that every vicious propensity, though serviceable as a hand or pleasurable as an eye, should be mortified,—that he who had done wrong should do so no more,—that injuries should be forgiven, not retaliated,—and that enemies should be loved, not destroyed. That a religion which paid so little respect to the passions, prejudices, and inveterate habits of men, which undeified their divinities and condemned their sacred rites, should so speedily and so extensively prevail in the world, and that, not only without the aid, but in defiance of the machinations of priestcraft, the power of magistrates, and the storms of persecution, is no weak proof of the divine agency which favoured it.

The nations of antiquity derived their several schemes of mythology and religion from princes, heroes, legislators, and gods; but the first preachers of the gospel had neither popular talents, nor legislative authority, nor reputed wisdom to give celebrity to their doctrines. Nearly all of them were born and trained up in circumstances of

obscurity, most of them were but slightly educated, one only was an adept in the arts of persuasion, and he was restrained from employing the enticing words of Grecian eloquence; yet these men, for the most part simple, unlettered, and uncouth, effected, by their words and their deeds, a revolution in the thoughts and practices of mankind, radical, extensive, permanent, and unlike to whatever had preceded it. When the author of christianity gave his apostles their final and definitive commission, he charged them to go and *teach* all nations; to boast, therefore, of their success, is to boast of the efficacy of the truths which they taught. But the interposition of the secular arm under Constantine, forbids our pleading any longer the *progress* of the gospel as a proof of its divine character. Its ministers could no longer say, "the weapons of our warfare are *not* carnal." The emperor, who condescended or presumed to call himself a bishop, made short work of the controversy, by solemnly forbidding, that any should sacrifice to idols, or enquire of oracles; he moreover, commissioned his soldiers to assail the temples of the gods, and to level them with the ground; nor did the gods themselves, meet with more honourable treatment, some of whom were exposed as objects of ridicule in the market-place of Constantinople, some rudely knocked to pieces, some converted into fuel, and others, whose component parts were gold and silver, melted into

common coin, and made to enrich the imperial exchequer.

It is supposed that mistaken gratitude was one source of superstition ; if so, it is not surprising, that the Nile, the parent of fertility to the land of Egypt, should have been from time immemorial, an object of grateful adoration to the Egyptians. The wisdom of priests led them to inculcate the notion, that the Nile rose, and overflowed his banks, in answer to their prayers. The emperor, however, put a sudden stop to this ancient and patriotic devotion, by making it a capital crime. The idolaters despaired of ever again seeing their thirsty country innundated by their divine river ; but at the return of June, the generous Nile, unmindful that his accustomed honours had been denied, rose above his banks, and diffused his favours as usual.*

According to the barbarous laws and usages of ancient times, slaves were the absolute property of their masters : the emperor, without reforming the Roman law on this subject, enacted, that all Jews, who had christian slaves in their families, should instantly enfranchise them.†

All must applaud the humanity of Constantine, in that he put an interdict on the combats of gladiators ; and his justice, in that he recalled from exile, such christians as had been banished on

* Eusebius, Life of Constantine, Book iii. chap. 52, and iv. 27.

† Ibid. Book iv. chap. 27.

account of their religion, replaced in office such had been degraded, and restored to christian societies, such property as had been rapaciously seized, or unjustly alienated by the state. But his episcopal biographer is far from wishing us to be ignorant that the emperor, in the exercise of his royal munificence, conferred honours and dignities *specially on christians*, and that he liberally supplied the necessities of the church, out of the public funds.* This is a line of conduct in which it is very possible for a prince, in his zeal for religion, to transgress the bounds of justice. It is probable, that at least two thirds of the public money were furnished by pagans, and that, not for the purpose of building churches, or pensioning a new order of clergy.

“An absolute monarch,” says Mr. Gibbon, “who is rich without patrimony, may be charitable without merit; and Constantine too easily believed that he should purchase the favour of heaven, if he maintained the idle at the expense of the industrious, and distributed among the saints, the wealth of the republic. The same messenger who carried over to Africa the head of Maxentius, might be entrusted with an epistle to Cæcilian, bishop of Carthage. The emperor acquaints him, that the treasurers of the province are directed to pay into his hands, the sum of

* Life of Constantine, Book ii. chap. 43, 44, 45.—See also, Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, Book x. chap. 6.

three thousand *folles*, or eighteen thousand pounds sterling, and to obey his farther requisitions for the relief of the churches of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania. The liberality of Constantine increased in a just proportion to his faith, and his vices. He assigned in each city a regular allowance of corn, to supply the fund of ecclesiastical charity, and the persons of both sexes who embraced the monastic life, became the peculiar favourites of their sovereign. The christian temples of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, &c. displayed the ostentatious piety of a prince, ambitious, in a declining age, to equal the perfect labours of antiquity. The form of these religious edifices was simple and oblong; though they might sometimes swell into the shape of a dome, and sometimes branch into the figure of a cross. The timbers were framed for the most part, of cedars of Lebanon; the roof was covered with tiles, perhaps of gilt brass; and the walls, the columns, and the pavement, were incrustated with variegated marbles. The most precious ornaments of gold and silver, of silk and gems, were profusely dedicated to the service of the altar; and this spacious magnificence was supported on the solid and perpetual basis of landed property.”*

In this state of things, it is not to be supposed, that the love of truth, the fear of God, and the

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. III. Chap 20, 289.

desire of religious improvement, were the only or even the principal motives to the reception of the imperial faith. "The exact balance of the two religions continued but a moment; and the piercing eye of ambition and avarice soon discovered, that the profession of christianity might contribute to the interest of the present, as well as of a future life. The hopes of wealth and honours, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace. The cities which signalized a forward zeal, by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges and rewarded with popular donatives; and the new capital of the east, gloried in the singular advantage, that Constantinople was never profaned by the worship of idols. As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true, that in one year, twelve thousand men were baptized at Rome, beside a proportionate number of women and children; and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert. The powerful influence of Constantine was not circumscribed by the narrow limits of his life, or of his dominions. The education which he bestowed on

his sons and nephews, secured to the empire a race of princes, whose faith was still more lively and sincere, as they imbibed in their earliest infancy, the spirit, or at least the doctrine of christianity. War and commerce had spread the knowledge of the gospel beyond the confines of the Roman provinces; and the barbarians, who had disdained an humble and proscribed sect, soon learned to esteem a religion, which had been so lately embraced by the greatest monarch, and the most civilized nation of the globe. The Goths and Germans, who enlisted under the standard of Rome, revered the cross which glittered at the head of the legions, and their fierce countrymen, received at the same time the lessons of faith and of humanity.”*

When men are induced by the prurience of ambition and avarice to join themselves to religious societies, the deterioration of such societies and of the religion professed by them, will be the inevitable consequence. Nor will it be any matter of just surprise, if a system of reciprocal accommodation is formed between the prostituted religion and its earthly-minded professors, by which they will progressively debase each other, and by which the reign of corruption will be extended and prolonged. A few indubitable facts will prove that such anticipations are justified by the history of the church.

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. III. Chap. xx. 274.

“An enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution was owing to a variety of causes. A ridiculous precipitation in receiving new opinions, a preposterous desire of imitating the pagan rites, and of blending them with the christian worship, and that idle propensity, which the generality of mankind have towards a gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of christianity. Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken to Palestine, and to the tombs of the martyrs, as if there alone, the sacred principles of virtue, and the certain hope of salvation were to be acquired. The reins being once let loose to superstition, which knows no bounds, absurd notions, and idle ceremonies multiplied every day. Quantities of dust and earth, brought from Palestine, and other places remarkable for their supposed sanctity, were handed about as the most powerful remedies against the violence of wicked spirits, and were sold and bought every where at enormous prices. The public processions and supplications, by which the pagans endeavoured to appease their gods, were now adopted into the christian worship, and celebrated with great pomp and magnificence in several places. The virtues that had formerly been ascribed to the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to christian churches, to

water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the same privileges, that the former enjoyed under the darkness of paganism, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the gospel, or rather, under that cloud of superstition that was obscuring its glory. It is true, that as yet, images were not very common, nor were there any statues at all. But it is at the same time as undoubtedly certain, as it is extravagant and monstrous, that the worship of the martyrs was modelled, by degrees, according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ.

From these facts, which are but small specimens of the state of christianity at this time, the discerning reader will easily perceive, what detriment the church received from the peace and prosperity procured by Constantine, and from the imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the gospel.*

“The additions made by the emperors and others to the wealth, honours, and advantages of the clergy, were followed with a proportionable augmentation of vices and luxury, particularly among those of that sacred order, who lived in great and opulent cities; and that many such additions were made to that order after the time of Constantine, is a matter that admits of no dispute. The

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 4, Part ii. chap. 3, 365.

bishops on the one hand, contended with each other, in the most scandalous manner, concerning the extent of their respective jurisdictions; while, on the other, they trampled upon the rights of the people, violated the privileges of the inferior ministers, and imitated, in their conduct, and in their manner of living, the arrogance, voluptuousness, and luxury of magistrates and princes. This pernicious example was soon followed by the several ecclesiastical orders.*

The celebrated Mr. Baxter, speaking of the christian bishops of the fourth Century, says, "Their feuds and inhuman contentions were so many and so odious, that it is a shame to read them. Multitudes of cities had bishops set up against bishops, and some cities more than two or three, the people reviling and hating each other, and sometimes fighting tumultuously unto blood, for their several prelates. The christian world was made as a cock-pit, and the christian religion made a scorn, by the contentions of the bishops.

Constantine's wisdom, conscience, and interest, engaged him to use all his skill, kindness and power, to reconcile them: and if he had not done what he did, how unspeakably wretched would their odious contentions have rendered them? And yet he professeth his heart almost broken by their dissensions; and though he chid them bitterly, and exhorted them kindly, he could not prevail.

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 4, Part ii. Chap. 2, 356.

These contentions of the bishops and corruptions of manners, so distasted the more religious sort of people, that they occasioned the multiplying of separating heresies; and greatly increased and confirmed others, especially the Donatists and Novatians, because men thought them to be of better lives than the orthodox.*

It is probable that when Constantine entered into alliance with the bishops, he was not aware of the various and manifold ways, in which his episcopal friends would require his assistance. The disorders and immoralities which prevailed within the church, caused some virtuous persons to separate from her communion, and gave additional advantages to such as had aforetime separated. If the exertions of a friend, who was not dependant on the force of reason and persuasion only, to which the hearts and understandings of many are impervious, were so efficacious in *bringing proselytes into the church*, why should not be equally efficacious in *keeping* them there? An act of uniformity, enforced by the mighty arm of power, the *ultima ratio regum*, could not but be of exquisite service, to repress the growth of heretical pravity, and to keep in due subordination, the faithless sons of the church.

It is a current proverb, that *the knowledge of a disease is half the cure*; and when oppressed by any infirmity or sickness, we seek relief, we

* Treatise on Episcopacy, 24, 26.

endeavour, as though by instinct, to make out *what it is*, and *how we came by it*; so likewise, they who wish to see persecution expelled from christian societies, and who wish likewise to contribute to its expulsion, may do well to ascertain not only *wherein it consists*, but *how, and by what means it was introduced*. If we can elucidate this single point, we shall throw light on an important period of history involved in much darkness. To blend together elements so discordant as those of christianity and intolerance, would seem to require no small degree of subtlety and power; we shall show, however,

Thirdly, that this daring and deadly work was accomplished by the emperor and the bishops, when they took upon themselves to establish uniformity of faith and worship, and to enforce the same by penal laws.

“The grateful applause of the clergy,” says Gibbon, “has consecrated the memory of a prince who indulged their passions and promoted their interest. Constantine gave them security, wealth, honours and revenge; and the support of the orthodox faith, was considered as the most sacred and important duty of the civil magistrate. The edict of Milan, the great charter of toleration, had confirmed to each individual of the Roman world, the privilege of choosing and professing his own religion. But this inestimable privilege was soon violated; with the knowledge of truth, the emperor had imbibed the maxims of persecution;

and the sects which dissented from the catholic church, were afflicted and oppressed by the triumph of christianity. Constantine easily believed that the heretics who presumed to dispute *his* opinions, or to oppose *his* commands, were guilty of the most absurd and criminal obstinacy; and that a seasonable application of moderate severities might save those unhappy men from the danger of an everlasting condemnation. Not a moment was lost in excluding the ministers and teachers of the separated congregations from any share of the rewards and immunities which the emperor had so liberally bestowed on the orthodox clergy.* Eusebius exerts all the powers and fascinations of his rhetoric in setting forth these gracious and heroic acts of the High, the Mighty, and Victorious Constantine, who, “after he had, by suppressing discord, settled the church of God in a peaceable state, thought to suppress another sort of men, who were the bane and poison of human society. And these were certain hypocrites, who like caterpillars and locusts, under a counterfeit show of religion, did devour and root up cities; of whom our Saviour prophesied, calling them false prophets and ravening wolves, when he saith, *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; ye shall know them by their fruits.*† The emperor

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xxi. 304.

† Matthew vii. 15.—Is it presumptuous to ask, how did our

therefore, by an edict sent to the governors of provinces endeavoured to suppress such kind of men. And moreover, he endeavoured with wholesome admonitions to exhort them to timely repentance, promising, that upon their change and conversion, they might be received into the church, if they would be conformable thereunto.

Know therefore, (it is Constantine who speaks,) by this law which I have established, ye Moravians, Valentinians, Marcionists, Paulians and Cataphrygians, and all of you who desire that these sects and heresies should increase and spread abroad, which you have followed and maintained ; know, I say, that your doctrine is both vain and false. O ye enemies of truth and eternal life ! ye authors and counsellors of death, whose tenets and opinions are contrary to truth, consonant to wickedness, and full of vanity and fabulous fictions ! whereby ye spread abroad lies, oppress the innocent, and hide from the faithful the light of truth : for you, wandering after a false idea and shape of piety, poison others with your contagion, and lay heavy burdens on the conscience, and strive almost to take the daylight from man. But why

courtly bishop *know* that the heretics were *hypocrites* ? Moreover, if the nature of the tree is known by its fruits, and if the actions of men are the best criterion of their principles and dispositions, is there not some reason to fear, that Eusebius, with his episcopal brethren and their imperial master, were the ravening wolves ?

should I insist on particulars, seeing brevity of time and my own affairs do not permit me to describe your wickedness in such colours as it deserves? What then? shall we suffer this evil contagion to spread further, seeing the whole and sound are daily infected with this pestilential disease! Why should we not rather with all celerity, root out such wickedness, by taking notice of and inflicting public punishments on the offenders.

And that your pestilential and infectious errors spread no further, we enact and command by this law, that none of you shall dare hereafter to meet at conventicles; and therefore we command that all those places where you were wont to keep those meetings, shall be demolished; nor shall you keep any factious and superstitious meetings either in public or private houses, or remote places. But rather, if any of you have a care of the true and sincere religion, let them return to the catholic church, and be partakers of the holiness thereof, whereby they may come to the knowledge of the truth, and that upon fraudulent and perverse craftiness, namely your wicked and wretched seditions and heresies, you may not disturb the prosperity of our times. For it is agreeable to that prosperous and flourishing state which we by God's providence enjoy, that they who live in such an age of knowledge and hope, should be converted from all wandering blindness of error to the right way, from darkness to light, from ignorance to truth, and lastly from death to salvation.

And that our careful providence for curing these errors may be the more powerful and effectual, we have commanded as aforesaid that all your superstitious places of meeting, I say, all your heretical temples shall, without delay or contradiction, be pulled down and confiscated to the catholic church, and other places shall be converted to the use of the commonwealth, that so hereafter, you may have no conventicles. It is therefore commanded and enacted, that there shall be no wicked assemblies after this day, in any place, either public or private.

And thus, adds our florid historian, the emperor's edict discovered the dens and cages of these heretics, and also threatened their lords with punishment. But of those who had been led into error, and seduced by them, some, terrified with the emperor's comminations and threatenings, began cunningly to creep again into the church in a dissembling and crafty manner, to yield to the times; and because the law commanded that their books should be searched out, *they* were found out who had been the authors of those seditious heresies, and the rest of the heretics, who dissembled their profession, were discovered by these books. Others were truly converted to the right knowledge of God; so that these returning as it were from some colony, were received again into their own country, and acknowledged their mother church. And having

long gone astray from her, they returned unto her again with great joy and gladness, so that all the members of the church were united in one body, and strongly knit together in a firm concord : *and then the catholic church began to flourish, when all schisms and heresies were suppressed.* The effecting whereof, the church ascribed to God's gracious providence, who favoured this emperor more than all his predecessors, and made him the happy instrument to advance his glory.*

Thus were the sacred rights of private judgment and liberty of conscience, sacrificed to the idol uniformity. A Catholic, episcopal, and imperial church was established—firmly established, on the broad basis of intolerance and despotism.

Mr. Pope's aspiration to the Deity,—

“ Let not this weak, unknowing hand,
 “ Presume thy bolts to throw,
 “ And deal damnation round the land,
 “ On each I judge thy foe.”

contains a noble sentiment which every lover of religious liberty profoundly respects. Far be it from us to pry into the hearts of our fellow mortals or anticipate the decisive sentence of the omniscient judge : every such propensity should be repressed by the thought, that we are all to appear before the tribunal of our Maker, to give

* Life of Constantine, Book iii. chap. 61, 62, 63, 64.

an account, not of our neighbour's actions, but of our own.

But as the imperial bishops, with those who acknowledged their jurisdiction, assumed to themselves the exclusive honour of being the true church, it is not uncharitable to ask, could this claim be valid ; or rather did not the single circumstance, that this church cut off those who seceded from her communion, or refused to come into it, not only from the hope of salvation in the world to come, but also from peace, security and honour, in the present world, render it, *ipso facto*, a secular dominion, and no longer a christian church ? Is not a credible profession of faith and repentance essential to the very existence of a christian society ? And is a profession of faith and repentance *credible*, which is not voluntary and unpurchased ? He who devotes himself to the church, out of love to the emoluments attached to it, or submits from dread of the punishments denounced against the refractory, does not become thereby a christian. The discipline of a true christian church, can never be unfavourable to good morals : but the penal code of the imperial church held out strong incentives to lying and prevarication.

It is well observed by Mr. O'Leary, that Jesus Christ never said, " Whoever does not follow me shall be miserable in this world, shall be considered as a rebel to the state in which he lives, unprotected by the laws, doomed to the faggot, or stripped of his property." He leaves it to every

one's choice, either to follow or renounce him: "If any one choose to come after me." When his very disciples intended to quit him, he does not retain them by compulsion, but says in a gentle manner, "Are you also willing to quit me?" And it is vain to boast a gospel liberty, when people are dragged by confiscations, forfeitures, and death itself, as so many forced victims, into the sanctuary of religion.*

Yes, Mr. O'Leary, and it is likewise vain to boast of religious liberty, when people have not the liberty to change their religion as often as they please, without incurring any penalties but such as are purely spiritual and religious.

But admitting that the imperial church was a true church, and that the members of it were sound both in faith and morals, and admitting also that the schismatics were unsound in both, what were the acts of uniformity but ligatures, binding tainted and infectious members to the body, to the great peril of its health and beauty.

To a person deriving his knowledge of christianity from the pure sources of inspiration, it would never occur that the observance of Easter was any part of it, yet to establish uniformity as to the time of celebrating this festival, was one of the momentous transactions of the famous council held at Nicæ in Bythinia, A. D. 325. "Three hundred and eighteen bishops obeyed the summons of their indul-

* Miscellaneous Tracts, 339.

gent master ; the ecclesiastics of every rank, and sect, and denomination, have been computed at two thousand and forty-eight persons ; the Greeks appeared in person : and the consent of the Latins was expressed by the legates of the Roman pontiff. The session, which lasted about two months, was frequently honoured by the presence of the emperor. Leaving his guards at the door, he seated himself, (with the permission of the council,) on a low stool in the midst of the hall. Constantine listened with patience, and spoke with modesty ; and while he influenced the debates, he humbly professed that he was the minister, not the judge of the successors of the apostles, who had been established as priests and as gods upon earth. Such profound reverence of an absolute monarch towards a feeble and unarmed assembly of his own subjects, can only be compared to the respect with which the senate had been treated by the Roman princes who adopted the policy of Augustus. Within the space of fifty years, a philosophic spectator of the vicissitudes of human affairs, might have contemplated Tacitus in the senate of Rome, and Constantine in the council of Nice. The fathers of the capitol, and those of the church, had alike degenerated from the virtues of their founders ; but as the bishops were more deeply rooted in the public opinion, they sustained their dignity with more decent pride, and sometimes opposed with a manly spirit, the wishes of their sovereign. The progress

of time and superstition erased the memory of the weakness, the passion, the ignorance, which disgraced these ecclesiastical synods ; and the catholic world has unanimously submitted to the *infallible* decrees of the general councils.*”

The deliberations of the Nicene council were not confined to the adjustment of rites and ceremonies, but extended also to the decision of controverted articles of faith. It would seem, that knowledge should precede faith, and therefore, these who call upon others to believe certain propositions are not to be blamed for endeavouring to obtain and impart distinct perceptions of the doctrines conveyed by them. There are, however, some subjects which, from their greatness and sublimity, the mind of man cannot fully understand : it is probable that such were some of those which were brought before the Nicene council by the Arian controversy. This seems to have been the opinion of Constantine himself, who ascribes the disputes between Arius and his competitors, to the abstruseness of the subjects on which they were divided, to the indulgence of a vain curiosity, and to the love of disputation.

When Simonides, who was not only a wise and good man, but also an agreeable poet, was asked by Hiero, King of Syracuse, *what God was?* he required a whole day to deliberate on the important question ; and, when solicited for his answer,

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. xx. 302.

he requested two days, and at their expiration doubled the number; and, finally, confessed, that the longer he meditated on the mysterious question, the more obscure it appeared to him. Had the disputants of Nice possessed the patience and modesty of Simonides, it is probable that they would have thought more and said less, and that, consequently, they would have been less positive and more humble.

An ardent devotion to what is deemed truth, accompanied with charity, is very noble; and if the Nicene fathers had left their creed to the operation of its own evidence, it would *not* have been *our* duty to censure the unhesitating boldness with which they gave their opinions on the most difficult and inscrutable subjects. So far as the proceedings of the council were regulated by the laudable desire of allaying discord, promoting peace, and aiding the cause of truth, they command our respect; but could not these objects be attempted without maledictory clauses and penal laws? That love to God which is not accompanied with benevolence to man is to be suspected; and there can be no doubt, but that the banishment of Arius, the persecution of his followers, and the condemnation of his books, were flagrant violations of that charity, without which all knowledge and all faith are unavailable.

In the imperial edict against Arius and his followers, there is a strange inconsistency, in that it makes the reading or retaining an Arian book a

greater crime than the profession of Arianism. " Since Arius hath imitated wicked and ungodly men, it is just that he should undergo the same infamy with them. As, therefore, Porphyrius, an enemy of godliness, for his having composed wicked books against christianity, hath found a suitable reconipesne, so as to be infamous for the time to come, and to be loaded with great reproach, and to have all his impious writings quite destroyed: so also it is now my pleasure, that Arius, and those of Arius' sentiments, shall be called Porphyrians, so that they may have the appellation of those whose manners they have imitated. Moreover, if any book composed by Arius shall be found, it shall be committed to the flames; that not only his evil doctrine may be destroyed, but that there may not be the least remembrance of it left. This also I enjoin, that if any one shall be found to have concealed any writing composed by Arius, and shall not immediately bring it and consume it in the fire, death shall be his punishment; for as soon as he is taken in this crime he shall suffer a capital punishment." Thus Constantine.

To oppose a man's opinions, however erroneous they may be, by burning his books, is as unmanly as it is futile. It is a method of deciding a controversy which reduces the philosopher to an equality with the barbarian, and allows to truth no advantages but such as are common to error. Arianism was so far from being suppressed by

these violent but dishonourable means, that it soon after obtained the ascendancy. Constantine himself lived to repent of the banishment of Arius, whom he recalled in the year three hundred and thirty. The injured man, however, did not long survive his restoration to liberty; for, being rejected by the people of Alexandria, who were zealously attached to the person and doctrines of Athanasius, the emperor invited him to Constantinople, where he fell a victim to the vengeance of heaven or the malice of his enemies.* The tragical death of Arius, though considered by his enemies as a demonstration that his opinions were heterodox, did not impede their progress. If the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, there is much reason to think that both the Arian and Athanasian factions were somewhat astray from it. Whether either of them held the pure truth is not certain; but it is very clear that neither of them held it in love.

* Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book i. Chap. 25.—Arius was taken suddenly with violent pains in his bowels, and expired miserably while seeking relief in a common jakes, near the market-place in Constantinople. The historian Socrates ascribes the death of the heretic to the special interposition of divine justice. But we see that the most atrocious sinners live, and frequently enjoy health and prosperity; and the learned translator of Mosheim declares, that “after having considered this matter with the utmost care, it appears to him extremely probable, that this unhappy man was a victim to the resentment of his enemies, and was destroyed by poison, or some such violent method.”—*Note on Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. Cent. 4, Part II. Chap. 5, 418.*

The church was opprobriously militant; and the world was frequently enlightened by the corruscations of ecclesiastical anger, wrath, malice and blasphemy; the dignitaries of the church were, in many instances, set up and put down by the law of the strongest; and they sometimes fell foul of each other *propria persona*, and showed their skill and ability in pugilism by the deadly effects of their blows. Mr. Baxter affirms that they converted the church into a cock-pit; and the grave historian Socrates employs imagery equally dignified and expressive, when he compares the wars of the bishops to the lively and fierce rencounters of armies of gnats fighting in the air. Ammianus Marcellinus also, who, as well as Socrates was an eye-witness of what he described, states, that “the highways were covered with troops of bishops, galloping from every side to the assemblies, which they called synods; and while they laboured to reduce the whole sect to their own particular opinions, the public establishment of the posts was almost ruined by their hasty and repeated journeys.”

One Ischyrras of Alexandria practised secretly a kind of wickedness, which, in the judgment of Socrates, deserved a hundred kinds of death. We are at a loss to guess what sort of mysterious wickedness the historian can mean, and cannot but suppose that it contained the essence of all crimes against both God and man. It was—that, *having never taken orders, Ischyrras called himself*

*a minister, and presumed to execute the function of a priest.** From the same chapter of Socrates we learn that the venerable Athanasius, the holy bishop of Alexandria, was accused of holding commerce with the devil by the vile arts of magic and sorcery; and the emperor Constantius took the liberty of calling the champion of orthodoxy, *an impostor, a corrupter of men's souls, a disturber of the city, a pernicious fellow, one convicted of the worst crimes, not to be expiated by his suffering death ten times.* Athanasius, however, was not intimidated by the plain language of his imperial opponent, whom he designates *an idolater and a hangman, and one capable of all kinds of violence, rapine, and murder.* Did these christians acknowledge that authority which requires all who make pretensions to that character, to “put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering?” The best apology we can make for them, is to say, that they were too much taken up about the establishment of their churches, to hear *that voice* which calls to glory by the way of virtue—that they were too intent on obtaining dominion over others to govern themselves. If any one supposes that pure and undefiled religion was the prize for which those christian warriors contended, he must be egregiously mistaken: the point to be decided by these en-

* Eccles. Hist. Book I. Chap. 20.

gements was, who should be greatest, or which should be the establishment. The chief employment of the ministers of the church at this time was not offering up prayer and praise to God, and teaching the way of life to men; but it was making creeds and persecuting those who refused to subscribe, enacting laws and harassing those who were unwilling to submit. Some few, indeed, mindful that it was their business to "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers" engaged in *tilt and tournament* with evil spirits; but most of them signalized their skill and prowess in attempts to circumvent by artifice, to intimidate by curses, or to subdue by force, their fleshly enemies.

Athanasius, in his life of Antony, the famous Egyptian hermit, has displayed the heroism of that saint, in that he openly buckled with devils and vanquished them, notwithstanding their daring boldness, and their sly and subtle methods of warfare.* Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria, signalized his courage, in a much more guilty way, when at the second council of Ephesus, he assaulted Flavianus, patriarch of Constantinople, and gave him such an unmerciful beating, that the unfortunate patriarch died within three days.† The inauguration of Macedonius to the see of Constanti-

* Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book 2. Chap. 2.

† Evagrius, Eccles. Hist. Book II. Chap. 2 — Rights of the Christian Church. 201. 1709.

nople, was graced by the slaughter of about three thousand persons. As this prelate was introduced to the episcopal throne of the eastern capital by the aid of a military force, so he found it expedient to execute the duties of that high station by the same means.* So excessive were the zeal and tyranny of this bishop, that he not only compelled the reluctant to attend the sacrament, but gagged their mouths and obliged them to receive it.† Athanasius describes with just indignation

* Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book II. Chap 12.—Ibid. Book II. Chap. 22.

† Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book, ii. Chap. 30—The historian mentions several other instances of the ferocious zeal of Macedonius. As the civil and military forces were at the command of his cruelty, it was under no restraint ; he therefore indulged it freely. The delicacy of virgins, guilty of no crime but non-conformity, was not allowed to shield them from violence ; they suffered for their obstinacy by having their breasts squeezed between heavy and sharp pieces of wood, or scorched by the application of heated irons and roasted eggs.

The Novatians adhered with their usual firmness to the articles of their faith on the divinity of the Son of God, as well as on other subjects, notwithstanding the desolating effects of Arian intolerance ; they also sympathized with the Catholics in the time of their adversity. “ Macedonios was informed, that a large district of Paphlagonia was almost entirely inhabited by those sectaries. He resolved either to convert or to extirpate them, and as he distrusted, on this occasion, the efficacy of an ecclesiastical mission, he commanded a body of four thousand legionaries to march against the rebels, and to reduce the territory of Mantinium under his spiritual dominion. The Novatian peasants animated by despair and religious fury, boldly encountered the invaders of their country, and though

the savage and despotic conduct of George, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, by whose orders a company of pious Catholics, who refused to conform to his church, were impiously assaulted while engaged in their sabbath-devotions; some of them were driven into exile, some barbarously tortured, and some killed on the spot.*

It is both interesting and important to know how the great Athanasius himself was affected as to the sacred rights of conscience and private judgment. The council of Nice at which Athanasius appeared in the character of a deacon of the church of Alexandria, gave a favourable opportunity for the display of his opening genius. A few months only elapsed after the council of Nice before the archiepiscopal see of Egypt was rendered vacant by the death of Alexander; and the youthful champion of the orthodox faith was judged the most competent person to succeed his deceased benefactor. During the forty-six years of perilous vicissitudes in which Athanasius was bishop of Alexandria and primate of Egypt, he was driven into exile no less than five times; twenty years of his active and eventful life he spent as an outcast and fugitive; and the crowded cities of

many of the Paphlagonians were slain, the Roman legions were vanquished by an irregular multitude, armed only with scythes and axes; and except a few who escaped by an ignominious flight, four thousand soldiers were left dead on the field of battle."

* Socrates Eccles. Hist. Book II. Chap. 23.

Europe and the dreary solitudes of Lybia successively witnessed the magnanimous fortitude with which he sustained his sufferings. The third expulsion of Athanasius, from Alexandria, which took place in the year three hundred and fifty six, greatly perplexed the officers who were entrusted with the commission, and was attended with disgusting scenes of anarchy and bloodshed. From the caution and artifice with which the emperor proceeded in effecting the deposition of the archbishop, it would seem, that he was not without his fears that the attempt might seriously affect the peace and security of the empire: so great was the influence which Athanasius had obtained by his unmerited sufferings, his high character, and his popular talents. We are apt to suppose that a man who endures complicated and oppressive afflictions rather than submit to the imperative *dicta* of human authority in matters of religion, must have, not only a just notion, but also an acute feeling, of the universal right of religious liberty.

“The truth,” says this great man, “is to be preached, not with the aid of swords or darts or a military force, but by persuasion and advice. But, is the dread of the emperor, persuasion, or what kind of advice is that which he who refuses, is punished with exile or death?” Again, speaking of the Arian sect, he says, “Those whom it cannot bring into its creed by words, it endeavours to drag to itself by vehemence, by

stripes, and, by the use of prisons, and thus it openly renders itself any thing you please, rather than a religion: for the distinctive character of religion is, not to compel, but to persuade." Why then did not the spirited orator of the Nicene council employ his eloquence, to oppose the impious insult offered to religion, when the force and penalties of imperial laws, were added to the opinions of that council?

It is doubtful, if the enormity of violence in religion, did not, in the judgment of Athanasius, lose many of its aggravations, by being employed in defence of the *truth*. In a letter to Epictetus, bishop of Corinth, in allusion to some heterodox opinions which prevailed there, he says, "I wonder that your piety hath borne those things, and that you did not immediately put those heretics under restraint, and propose the true faith to them, that if they would not forbear to contradict, they might be declared heretics, for it is not to be endured that these things should be either said or heard amongst christians."

In another instance, the champion of the *homo-ousion*, declared that heretics "ought to be held in universal hatred for opposing the truth; and at the same time consoled himself with the grateful anticipation that, the emperor when duly informed would put a stop to their wickedness. Still however, considering that the times in which Athanasius lived were turbulent, and that amongst the bishops, theological rancour had supplanted chris-

tian charity, we must consider him on the whole, as a virtuous and estimable man.*

The great Athanasius, notwithstanding his immortal name, died in the three hundred and seventy-third year of our æra.

The birth of Augustin is placed about twenty years anterior to the death of Athanasius. Ta-

* Doctor Haweis declares that, in his view, the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed breathe the noblest exercise of true christian charity.

Impartial History of the Church, Cent. 4, 307.

Yet this author was a sincere and spirited friend to religious liberty. This ought to be mentioned for the instruction and encouragement of those who think that liberality and latitudinarianism are inseparable. He, who having discovered a latent fire, gives information of it, and thereby prevents a conflagration, is to be considered as a benefactor. And does not he who, thinking his neighbour in danger of falling into inextinguishable fire, gives him fair and explicit notice of it, in order that he may escape, show his good will to his neighbour? It may be said that he who announces fire in the world to come is deceived, and therefore propagates a false alarm. Be it so, still he is entitled to praise for his good intentions; and all which the great law of christian liberty requires of such a person, is, that he should content himself with plainly denouncing his definitive sentence of perdition, and should leave it to the righteous and omniscient Judge to confirm and execute that sentence. If however there are any persons in the world who make so little of the awful considerations of a future state as to issue damnatory clauses, and practice on the hopes and fears of their fellow creatures as to what is remote and unknown, for the low purposes of obtaining wealth and influence, it is not in the power of christian charity to put an honourable construction upon their conduct.

gaste, a city of Numidia, is celebrated as the native place of Augustin; his father was a burghess of Tagaste, and his name was Patricius; his mother, whose name was Monica, was a woman of great virtue and piety, and she took much care to have her son instructed in the principles of the christian religion. Notwithstanding the advantages of his education, Augustin was in his youth, equally poor and profligate; but as he grew in years, he grew in wisdom, and in process of time acquired both wealth and reputation. After teaching grammar and rhetoric at Tagaste, Carthage, and Milan, and experiencing many of the unpleasant vicissitudes which attend an itinerant mode of life, he became bishop of Hippo, and continued for half a century, the light and glory of the established church of Africa.

It is not, however, for the sake of giving biographical memoirs of Augustin, that we have mentioned his name, but for the purpose of illustrating the state of religious liberty at the close of the fourth and commencement of the fifth century, by adverting to the opinions and conduct of that distinguished man, on this momentous subject.

The famous Le Clerc says, that "Augustin was one of the very first who promoted two doctrines which take away all goodness and justice both from God and man. By the one, God is represented as——. By the other, he stirred up magistrates, and all who had the administration of public affairs, to prosecute those who

differed from them in religion. It is certain the king of France, who is otherwise no tyrant, could not by any means have been induced to cancel all his past edicts in favour of the reformed, and make use of the barbarity of soldiers, to extort from them a confession, which none of the clergy could by all their false reasonings effect, unless the letters of St. Austin had been read to him, and the authority of them imposed upon him by flatterers, whom he thought he might safely follow. For these reasons, I, who have never accustomed myself to calumniate either the living or the dead, have ventured to say the truth of St. Augustin."

Voltaire, in his piece in favour of the Calas family, the father of which was by an unjust sentence, broken upon the wheel, and burnt to ashes, says that Augustin had two opinions on persecution, viz. that he thought it right when he was in power, and wrong when he was not in power. These are charges too detrimental to the memory of Augustin to be believed by any honest and benevolent man except, supported by the most substantial evidence.

"If the enthusiastic frenzy of the monks," says Mosheim "exaggerated in a manner pernicious to the interests of morality the discipline that is obligatory on christians, the interests of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by two monstrous errors which were almost universally adopted in this century, and became a source of

innumerable calamities and mischiefs in the succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, *that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted*; and the second equally horrible, though in an other point of view, was, *that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after proper admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporeal tortures.*"—In the judgment of our impartial historian, the divine Augustin was not innocent as to the first of these innovations, and certainly guilty as to the second. "The maxim relating to the justice and expediency of punishing error was introduced with those serene and peaceful times which the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne procured to the church. It was from that period approved by many, enforced by several examples during the contests that arose with the Priscillianists and Donatists, *confirmed and established by the authority of Augustin, and thus transmitted to the following ages.*"*

It is right that Augustin should be heard in his own defence. His letter to Donatus, proconsul of Africa, is as follows:—"It is indeed painful to reflect that the church of Africa is in such a situation as to require the aid of civil authorities. But on the other hand, there being, according to the apostle, no power on earth which does not ema-

* Eccles. Hist. Cent. 4, part II: Chap 3, 381.

nate from God, it may be truly said, that when *ye who are invested with dignity, use it in defence of our mother the holy Catholic church, our aid is then in the Lord who made heaven and earth.* For who, most illustrious sir and son deserving of our praises, can avoid discovering amidst the many ills which afflict us, that from the brilliancy of your talents and your great zeal for the religion of Jesus Christ, providence has placed you at the head of the government, in order to restrain, by means of power and good-will, the enemies of the church in their wicked and sacrilegious attempts? It is my duty, nevertheless, to caution you against one thing, which is that your very justice makes us apprehend, that as all grievances caused to the christian society by these ungrateful and impious men are more criminal than those done to the state, you may be induced to punish them with every rigour, urged rather by the enormity of their crime than bearing in mind the meekness of the religion against which they have sinned. Let not this be the case we beseech you for the sake of Jesus Christ, since we do not seek to be avenged on earth; nor is it just that the persecutions we suffer, should make such an impression on our minds, as to cause us to forget the commands of our Redeemer, for whose faith and name we endure them, and for whom we actually love our enemies, and unceasingly pray for them. *We desire, it is true, that the severity of the laws and of the judges, may be employed for*

their reform, but not to deprive them of life ; that the government watch over their conduct, but without applying against them all the punishment they deserve ; that their excesses may be restrained, but not that they be placed in such a situation as to prevent repentance.

We beseech you, therefore, that when any one of us shall represent to you that the church has been grievously injured, or you may in any other way have learnt her afflictions, that you do not remember that you are the arbiter of life and death ; but on the contrary that you be ever mindful of this our petition. Attend, oh ! illustrious and much-beloved son, to our mediation in favour of the lives of those to whom we beseech God to grant amendment ; for besides its being the duty of us ecclesiastics never to desist from the practice of overcoming evil with good, it is necessary you should consider, as from prudence we hope you will, that no one, except ourselves, informs you of the injuries done to the church. For this same reason, if you think of inflicting death on those we denounce, you prevent us from applying to your tribunal, and they will then become more insolent ; since, at all events we should prefer to be sacrificed ourselves, rather than be instrumental to their suffering capital punishment.

I, in short, for my own part, again beseech you to receive this my exhortation, or this my remonstrance and humble request ; and I flatter myself that I am authorized to expect this favour, even

though you were invested with a higher dignity, and I no other than a private individual. Nevertheless, cause it as soon as possible to be made known to the Donatists, that the proclamations you issued against them, and which they consider no longer in force, are still in full vigour, to the end that they let the catholics remain quiet. As for the rest, the means of rendering our exertions for their conversion effectual, will be by restraining in such a manner through your own measures, this proud and petulant sect that they may never be able to boast enduring, for the good cause, the vexations aimed against it; since it is rather indispensably necessary, when they have been convicted of their crimes in your tribunal, or any other inferior one, that every exertion should be made to convince them of the truth of the faith, by causing them to reform their opinions, and to contribute to the conversion of the others. Because it cannot be denied, that it is a fruitless task to seek to compel a man to embrace good and withdraw from evil, however great this may be, unless it is through the way of persuasion."

The sentiments and wishes of Augustin, on the subject of religious liberty, are displayed with less ambiguity in his letter to the Donatist Vicentius:—
 "I was formerly of opinion, that no one ought to be compelled to return to the bosom of the church, under the impression that we ought not to use any other arms than words; that our contest ought to be no other than argument; and that such only

ought to be esteemed as a victory which is gained through the force of conviction; for otherwise those would become feigned catholics, who before were avowed heretics. But some of my companions have since pressed me closely, not with reasons but with facts, which they quoted to me in great numbers, whence I have been induced to adhere to their opinion. For they argued with me from the example of my own residence (Hippo), which, having formerly decided in favour of the heresy of Donatus, was afterwards restored to the catholic unity by means of the decrees of the emperors; and this so cordially, that it now hates the above heresy, and even appears never to have belonged to it. They quoted similar examples of other cities to me in such a manner, that I conceived that what is said in Proverbs may also be understood in this sense: *give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.**

How many of them had we not among us, as I was afterwards informed, who were desirous of being converted from a conviction of the truth of our religion; nevertheless they delayed it, in order not to expose themselves to the animosity of their own party! How many were withheld, not by a supposition that their sect was founded in truth, which most assuredly they left out of the question, but by a blind custom which rendered them callous, so that it might be said of them,

* Prov. ix. 9.

*a servant will not be corrected with words; for though he understand, he will not answer.** How many were there not who lived persuaded that among the Donatists the true church was to be found, but through no other motive than a natural carelessness, which rendered them dull and sluggish to find it out! How many were kept back from entering therein by the calumnies of certain malevolent persons, who imputed to the catholics the introduction of I know not what novelties into religion! How many, in short, who, believing it was of no consequence to be a christian in this or the other sect, continued in that of Donatus, because they had been therein born, and because there was no one to withdraw them from it, and lead them to the true church! Hence do they now rejoice with us that in consequence of the grievances they then suffered, they were roused from the lethargy of inveterate habits, in which they would otherwise infallibly have perished. It may indeed be said, that with some, such measures do not avail. To this I will answer, that the incurable diseases of some, ought not to cause the refusal of remedies to others seeking the re-establishment of their health. We ought not to be foiled by the obstinate, unwilling to yield to persuasion, and of whom it is written, *in vain did I chastise my children, that they might be well educated.†* It is necessary also to attend to many

* Prov. xxix. 19.

† Jerem. ii. 30.

others of whose amendment we bear witness, to the great consolation of our heart. Finally, I agree that it would be exercising a tyrannical power to terrify heretics without convincing them of their error; but it is also undeniable, that their inveterate habits will not suffer them to incline to conviction, and will obstruct their being led, unless it is very slowly, towards the road of salvation unless they are moved by terror.”*

Mr. Locke, than whom perhaps no man of any age or nation was more capable of taking a penetrating and comprehensive view of a subject, was of opinion that a spirit of toleration is the chief mark of the true church.

His words are, “Since you are pleased to enquire what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely, that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true church. For whatsoever

* We are surprised that a man so highly celebrated for his piety as Augustin should have stained his reputation by supporting the principles of intolerance. If a persecutor is in other respects a man of good morals, it is more than we ought to expect. Bayle, in his “Historical and Critical Dictionary,” mentions a physician who accuses Augustin of having been a powerful drinker; and Augustin himself acknowledges that the *Crapula* sometimes overtook him. “*Crapula autem nonnunquam surrepit servo tuo.*”

The *Crapula* is a disorder brought on by intemperance, especially intemperance in drinking: “heaviness of head by over much gulping of wine,” says a great lexicographer.

Holyoke's Large Dictionary.

some people boast of the antiquity of names and places, or of the pomp of their outward worship; others, of the reformation of their discipline; all, of the orthodoxy of their faith, for every one is orthodox to himself; these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men's striving for power and empire over one another, than of the church of Christ. Let any one have ever so true a claim to all these things, yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and good-will in general towards all mankind, even to those who are not christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true christian himself. *The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them*, said our Saviour to his disciples, *but ye shall not be so.** The business of true religion is quite another thing. It is not instituted in order to the erecting an external pomp, nor to the obtaining of ecclesiastical dominion, nor to the exercising of compulsive force; but to the regulating of men's lives according to the rules of virtue and piety.†

If toleration is the chief mark of a true christian church, and none can be saved but those who are members of some such church, there is much reason to entertain serious apprehension about the followers of Arius and Athanasius. They hated each other with perfect hatred, and wanted nothing for mutual destruction, but licence and abi-

* Luke, xxii. 25, 26.

† Works, Vol. VI. page 5, London Ed. 1801.

lity. If there were any churches at this time free from the leaven of malice and wickedness—any who were not defiled with innocent blood—any who still kept the truths and institutions of the gospel in their pristine purity, they were probably some of those obscure and proscribed sects, whom the powerful and contending factions agreed to calumniate and persecute.

“It is a principle,” says Montesquieu, “that every religion which is persecuted, becomes itself persecuting: for as soon as by some accidental turn it rises from persecution, it attacks the religion which persecuted it.”*

Hence, when persecution is set about in its true spirit, it generally happens that acts of aggression and reprisal multiply so fast, and become so interwoven with each other, that it is not easy to say which of the parties is most culpable; but in the present instance, it would seem that the abettors of the Nicene faith were the first to use, and the last to give up the right and the power of persecution.

When praise and blame are applied to societies in the gross, they are generally misapplied; for it often happens, that no two societies differ more from each other, than the members of each society differ among themselves. Many of the historical records of the Arians were destroyed by the triumphant zeal of their adversaries; had it not

* The Spirit of Laws, Vol. II. 208.

been so, it is probable that we should see here and there an angel of light among the incarnate devils. In the Catholic church there were men and even bishops of a different way of thinking from Augustin: Hilary of Poitiers, for instance, was earnest and indefatigable in opposing the Arians, yet he did *not* think it expedient to have them brought to their senses by salutary torture. He wrote twelve books in defence of the trinity, and suffered an oriental banishment from the Arians. The following passage from Hilary's book *contra Auxentium* shows at once a polished mind, a generous heart, and a just sense of religion.

"Above all," says he, "it wrings the heart, and causes the tears to flow, to behold the weakness of the present generation in adopting certain absurd opinions already prevailing, *one of which is, that men ought to patronize God by conciliating the power of the age, in order, by this means, to sustain the church of Jesus Christ.* Tell me, ye bishops who are of this way of thinking, of what aid did the apostles avail themselves, when they preached the Gospel; or to what great ones of the earth did they recur, in order to convert, as in fact they did, almost all nations, from idolatry to the worship of the true God? Was it in palaces that they sought favour, when under the scourge and in chains, they sang hymns in praise to the Lord? Was St. Paul perchance authorized with imperial decrees, when, through his great labours made the object of asto-

nishment to the whole world, he allured nations to the church of Jesus Christ? Did he find patrons in a Nero, a Vespasian, or a Decius, when it was their persecutions that so much fructified the seed of his preaching? Did not the apostles hold, as we now do, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, although they were obliged to live by the work of their hands, and under the necessity of celebrating the divine mysteries in cenatories and other solitary places, travelling by sea and land through various countries, visiting even villages and farms; and all this in direct contravention to the decrees of the senate and emperor? Is it not certain that the gospel was then preached with the greatest courage and success, and that the more obstacles were opposed to its effects, the more did its power triumph over that of tyrants? *But now, what an unfortunate reverse! It is now pretended to support the divine faith by means of human authority; and whilst it is ostentatiously sought to add to the name of Jesus, his power is considered as diminished. The same church, that formerly through the endurance of chains, persecutions and banishment, extended its faith, now diffuses terror by means of proscriptions and prisons, seeking to be believed through the effects of force. It now seeks to owe its permanency to the power of those of its own communion, when it was through the fury of those who were its persecutors, that it was formerly consolidated. It now banishes the priests of those same sects which*

anciently drove its own ministers into exile. In short, that same church now seeks to be applauded by the world which only by being hated of men can be pleasing to her spouse. When, with such scandalous abuses before me, I compare the church of the present times, with that which Jesus Christ confided to our ancestors, I cannot but exclaim that it has undergone the most deplorable change."

It was thus the dusky throne of intolerance was raised on the ruins of christian liberty and piety in the midst of the church, and a second *desolating abomination*, more implacable and less merciful than the Roman armies, got a permanent station *where it ought not* to have been allowed a transitory visit. The church was established, and the sacred rights of conscience immolated at the sanguinary shrine of the idol *uniformity*. And what after all was this uniformity, for the sake of which, so many councils were called, so many creeds made, and so many crimes committed? The outlines of it are strikingly marked by Hilary: "It is a thing equally deplorable and dangerous," says that prelate, "that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; because we make creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The *homoousion* is rejected, and received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son,

is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every year, nay every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other's ruin."

If Arianism had not been persecuted it is not likely that it would have become so prevalent as it was when Hilary wrote against it; and if Constantine and his successors, in the room of becoming defenders of the faith, had confined their labours to the defence of the empire against foreign enemies, and to the administration of justice and the preservation of peace among their own subjects, the exemplary bishop of Poitiers would not have been banished from the temperate climate of Gaul to the torrid zones of Asia, nor would the christian profession have been disgraced by those scenes of anarchy and turbulence which he has described. The forcible imposition of articles of faith and modes of worship necessarily involves in it an assumption and an exercise of power destructive of that freedom of judgment and choice, which is essential to the existence of religion. The less religion men have, the more easy it will be for them to conform to an established church: what should hinder their professing that truth, which, without the trouble of investigation, is parcelled out to

them by the bounty of the state, especially when, by the profession, they shun a prison or a fine, and obtain honour and emolument?

If it were the duty of emperors and kings to establish religion and distribute the rewards of righteousness, they would be endowed with faculties of discerning, by an intuitive glance, who are and who are not righteous. But the most sagacious monarch in the world does not certainly know whether the servant who stands before him is meditating devotion or blasphemy. Conformity to the law of God is of the utmost moment; but to say who are conformed to it *in truth*, and who *merely in appearance*, the secrets of the heart must be made manifest. And if men are not supplied with motives of conformity to that law from their own breasts, they cannot from the cabinets and exchequers of princes. An aspect of religion, irreproachable before men, may be easily assumed; but, to be righteous before God, is an attainment of great difficulty. If the difficulties of this attainment, however, were many more and much greater than they are, they would still be far exceeded by its value; when the appendages of wealth and rank with all those evanescent glories which pertain to the fashion of the world have passed away, the honour and happiness of the righteous will remain.

It is not, however, exclusively in reference to the world to come that we discover the worth of unfeigned religion; for, in respect to the present

life, it is, in many instances, the strongest, and in some, the only security of honourable conduct which one man can have of another. There are many cases in which men would evade the sanctions of law and justice, but for the restraints of religion and conscience. The obligations of religion too carry the improvement of those by whom they are acknowledged to a much greater length than any civil institutions whatever. If, therefore, there is reason to think, that the establishment of a church by civil and penal laws is detrimental to religion, this is no inconsiderable argument against such an establishment.

It is evident, from the history of the times on which we treat, that in proportion as the church became established, by means of power and riches, religion declined, insomuch that it could scarcely be descried, except in the *earthquake* of dissension, in the *fire* of malice, or in the *still small voice* of some obnoxious sect.

So early as the fourth century, the grandeur and opulence of the see of Rome had become so great, that few objects, in the wide circumference of the empire, acted more powerfully on the desires of ambitious men. The bishop of Rome, in the number of his attendants, in the splendour of his equipage, and in the sumptuousness of his table, vied with the most powerful princes: hence the saying of Prætextatus, who was a pagan and præfect of the city—*Make me bishop of Rome, and I will be a christian too.*

The zeal of Constantius in the cause of Arianism, induced him to propose two things to the orthodox bishops, viz. either to subscribe to the decisions of the councils of Arles and Milan, or quit their *livings* and go into banishment. On this occasion, most of the bishops, who aforetime had so strenuously supported the Nicene faith, gave a memorable display of their submissive loyalty. There were a few distinguished prelates, however, in whose estimation truth was of more value than perishable riches and imperial favour. Among these should be mentioned Osius of Cordova, Hilary of Poitiers, and Liberius of Rome.—The last of these venerable exiles, when taking his journey to Beræa, in Thrace, the place of his destination, remitted to the court at Milan a large sum of gold, which had been sent to defray his travelling expenses, with the remark, that *the emperor and his eunuchs might want that gold to pay their soldiers and bishops*. During the absence of Liberius, the Arian faction at Rome elected Fælix, and consecrated him to the episcopal dignity, in a very disorderly way within the walls of the imperial palace. The orthodox clergy of the capital were indignant at this infraction on their privileges, and bound themselves, by the solemnity of an oath, never to desert their exiled bishop, nor submit to the heretical usurper. In the mean time, the horrors of banishment subdued the constancy of Liberius, and induced him to yield, in some degree, to the Milan creed. This circumstance facilitated

the return of Liberius, while the determined ardour of his friends compelled the emperor to consent to it. On the return of Liberius, there were two bishops in the capital; and the imperial pleasure was, that they should both live, and govern their respective congregations, in peace.

“ But the ideas of toleration were so repugnant to the practice, and even to the sentiments of those times, that when the answer of Constantius was publicly read in the circus of Rome, so reasonable a project of accommodation was rejected with contempt and ridicule. The eager vehemence which animated the spectators in the decisive moment of a horse-race, was now directed towards a different object; and the circus resounded with the shouts of thousands, who repeatedly exclaimed—*One God! one Christ! one bishop!* The zeal of the Roman people in the cause of Liberius, was not confined to words alone; and the dangerous and bloody sedition which they excited soon after the departure of Constantius, determined that prince to accept the submission of the exiled prelate, and to restore him to the *undivided* dominion of the capital.— After some ineffectual resistance, his rival was expelled from the city by the permission of the emperor, and by the power of the opposite faction; the adherents of Fælix were inhumanly murdered in the streets, in the public places, in the baths, and even in the churches; and the face of Rome, upon the return of a christian bishop, renewed the

horrid image of the massacres of Marius, and the proscriptions of Sylla.”*

On the decease of Liberius, which took place in the year 366, the metropolis of the west was again agitated by the fury of two contending factions: two bishops were elected, and their respective merits supported with so much spirit, and with such deadly arguments, that no less than one hundred and thirty seven persons were killed in the church itself.†

The establishment of christianity impeded learning and promoted superstition. Lactantius, whose *Divine Institutions* containing an eloquent and masterly refutation of paganism, lived in obscurity and indigence, while many illiterate and worthless men *who wrought miracles* rose to wealth and fame. Jerome, the learned monk of Palestine, was beaten with rods, by an angel, for reading Cicero, Virgil, and Horace. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was unable to consecrate a church without the aid of *relics*: the same ingenious prelate proved the truth of the Nicene creed, by the testimony of men possessed with devils.

There is no one truth, a rigid adherence to which is more necessary to the purity of a christian church than this, viz.: that *christianity is and ever must remain both as to doctrine and worship what the New Testament represents it; and that*

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xxi, 389.

† Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book iv. Chap. 24.

all additions, whether plain or pompous, whether of Jewish or Pagan extraction, and by whatever power or with whatever design introduced, are not only without sufficient authority, but also, repugnant to the authority and prerogatives of the christian Legislator. So long as this grand principle is kept inviolate by a christian society, that society cannot become an establishment, it cannot become the instrument of political artifice and injustice, nor can it become the *factory* of superstitious conceits and impositions. The genuine spirit of christianity and its majestic simplicity have vanished from christian churches, in proportion as they have receded from the practical observance of this leading truth. When, however, the designs of the emperors and the bishops required that the gospel should be rendered pleasing to thousands who still continued ignorant of its nature and disobedient to its precepts, it became indispensably necessary that they should modify it as circumstances might require. Thus Gregory *Thaumaturgus*, the worker of wonders, “perceiving that the ignorant multitude persisted in their idolatry, on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the pagan festivals, granted them permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping that, in process of time, they would return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular course of life.” Thus Homer made his heroes like gods, by making his gods

like men. On this plan christianity, in the room of correcting the follies and vices of the world, sanctions them. If any thing can justify our doing evil, it is the good design with which we do it; thus we acquit Austin who pleaded for persecution because it was useful—it converted the Donatists; thus we excuse Gregory who sanctified heathenism by adopting it, with the laudable design of filling the church with proselytes and saving souls from perdition.*

When expediency, interest, and good designs are allowed to be sufficient reasons for doing what is not right, religion and morals are in great jeopardy. If Austin was right, very few persecutors, ancient or modern, have at any time been wrong; and if the conduct of Gregory deserves imitation, all the absurd and wicked practices of those to whom christianity is preached, would, at one time or another, make a part of its worship.

The practice of modifying and adorning the gospel, in order to render it the more attractive and captivating, became so prevalent, and was carried to such a pernicious extent under the auspi-

* As Gregory was indued with the power of working miracles, why did he not attempt the conversion of idolaters by the exercise of that power which was given him for that purpose? Could not he, who commanded devils to go and come, by letters addressed to them, dispossess those evil spirits of their usurped dominion over the minds of men, in some way less exceptionable than that of transplanting their devices into the church?

ces of imperial and episcopal policy, that its original character soon became extinct.

The refinements of the Platonic, and the mortifications of the Pythagorean philosophy, were introduced to allure the devotees of those systems.

The mysteries of paganism were held in high esteem and veneration; and though the worship instituted by Christ, and practised by his apostles, had no fellowship with solemn secrets, not to be divulged but to the initiated, yet the doctors of the church found it expedient to render a simple and positive institution, *secret and mysterious*, in order that it might have the more happy effect.

It was an ancient custom with some oriental nations to offer their devotions with their faces turned towards that part of the heavens which is first irradiated by the rising sun; and notwithstanding that this practice was founded on a local conception of the Divinity, palpably inconsistent with every idea of his ubiquity and omniscience, yet a profound and lasting deference was paid to it.*

The adoption of *Levitical* phraseology, was not designed merely as a compliment to the Jews; for it was perceived, that while *tythes, first fruits, and oblations*, were exquisitely adapted to conciliate

* In the days of Socrates the historian, the church at Antioch in Syria had not conformed to this ancient canon of superstition; for the altar was situated not towards the East, but towards the West.

the minds of a people to whom they were so familiar, and by whom they were considered to be of divine appointment, they were no less adapted to increase the opulence of the christian clergy, and thereby to consolidate the establishment. It was not therefore in vain, that deacons became Levites, and bishops chief-priests.*

It is not surprising that sinners of every name and character, laden with every diversity of folly and vice, should honour the church with their company, when such ample preparations were made for their entertainment. Gross minds are not so much affected by the *object* as by the *manner* of worship. Greeks and Romans, desirous of participating the advantages attached to the profession of the established religion, had the privilege of worshipping Christ and the christian martyrs, with rites very similar, if not precisely the same, with those they formerly employed, in the worship of their heroes, gods and goddesses. Clouds of incense, altars, mitres, tiaras, crosiers, lustrations, gold and silver vases, wax-tapers and processions,

* Socrates, in the chapter quoted in the preceding note, observes, that his contemporaries who were so scrupulous in imitating the Jews as to the time of keeping Easter, did not consider with themselves, that when the typical forms of the Jewish law were translated into christian faith, their literal observation vanished;—that there was no law established by Christ, in the gospel, which allowed the observance of Jewish rites;—and that the apostle Paul hath, in plain words, forbidden them in his epistle to the Galatians.

were no longer the peculiarities of pagan temples and pagan liturgies, but swelled the pomp, and multiplied the proselytes, of the christian church. The temples of the established religion, within and without, mimicked the shape, and rivalled the magnificence of the splendid fanes of the unfortunate gods! These edifices were consecrated with decent rites chiefly borrowed from the venerated usages of the ancient idolatry.

That neither the abstemious nor the voluptuous might have cause to complain, numerous, or rather numberless fasts and feasts were instituted; and that equal partiality should be shewn to the institutes of judaism and paganism, some were taken from the one, and some from the other. It does not appear that Augustin was in the least unwilling, that the glory of all nations should come into the church, yet that prelate acknowledges, *that the yoke imposed upon many christians in his days, was more intolerable than that under which the jews formerly groaned.*

Socrates, who flourished at the same time as Austin, declares that the ceremonies and customs of the church were so infinite in number, and so various in kind, that to commit them to paper would be extremely tedious, if not absolutely impossible. Our historian further observes, that there were some who, unmindful of the agreement of the apostles as contained in the fifteenth of the Acts, made light of fornication as an indifferent thing,

while at the same time, they contended for *holidays* as for life and death.*

* Eccles. Hist. Book v. Chap. 21—Christianity is a religion of divine revelation, not of human device;—a religion of remembrance not of invention. God spake to the jews by the prophets; he hath since spoken to jews and gentiles by his Son. The apostles themselves did not presume to teach and enjoin any thing with authority but what they received with authority. The apostle Paul carefully distinguishes between what he was authorized to command by inspiration, and what he said under direction of his own prudence 1. Cor. vii.—I delivered to you among the first things, what I also received first, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Macknight's translation, I received from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you *that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me,* 1 Cor. xi. 23. If thou put the brethren in REMEMBRANCE of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ. 1 Tim. iv. 6. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in *remembrance* of these things. 2 Pet. i. 12. If Christianity is a religion not of human device, but of divine authority—not of invention, but of remembrance, is it not preposterous for christian kings and bishops to pretend to authority in matters of faith, and to a power of decreeing rites and ceremonies? Rites and ceremonies employed in christian worship either are a part of christianity or they are not; if they are a part of christianity, they may be found in the pages of the New Testament, and a power of decreeing them is not wanted: if they are not a part of christianity, and consequently are not to be found in the New Testament, a power of decreeing them is not only inept and nugatory, but impious. The ancient pharisees thought themselves authorized to decree rites and ceremonies; but they were assured by the greatest of all prophets, that it was in vain they worshipped *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Matt. xv. 9. Human authority in matters of faith, and the exercise of power in modes of worship have been as pernicious in their operation as they are unfounded in just principles. It would

It is a curious circumstance that the bishops and statesmen of this period, while sedulously endeavouring to cement their scheme of uniformity, multiplied the sources of discord. It is equally remarkable, that while the established church became increasingly inimical to pagans, and increasingly unwilling to allow them the blessings of a bare toleration, she progressively advanced in her partiality to paganism itself. Strange, that the practice of an ancient religion should be a crime to be punished by the magistrate in those who had been educated in it, and with whose habits it was congenial, while at the same time, the observance of its solemnities, when transplanted into a new religion, to which they were wholly incongruous, should be praiseworthy, and deserving of secular rewards !*

It might be interesting and useful to view, yet more minutely, the jarring elements of those churches which rose to power and exerted intole-

be a hard case indeed, if a father had not liberty to protect his own children. If any man can prove that he has a right to create a religion for his neighbour, he may, at the same time and by a parity of reason, prove, that he has a right to compel his neighbour to receive it.

* The exact coincidence between several of the ceremonies in which the devotion of the established church at the end of the fourth century was principally exercised, and the rites of paganism, which was then under the most severe interdict, is proved beyond dispute by our illustrious countryman, Sir Isaac Newton.

Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, Part I. Chap. 14.

rance in the latter part of the fourth century. It would not be difficult to discover in them the seminal principles of that organic strife and warfare, which dishonoured the christian name from that time to this.

It does not appear that any particular church can be established, without being attended by many of those evils, which have, in greater and less degrees, accompanied all the corrupt hierarchies of Europe.

“ I have not a wish,” says a Roman catholic clergyman, “ to see my own religion again *established*; rather let it remain as it is, provided its professors enjoyed the civil rights of citizens. As it is I am convinced it possesses most of the original character of christianity, and he that can desire to see that again effaced by the wealth, the dignities, the pageantries,” he might have added, the crimes, “ of an establishment, let him not pretend to any sincerity of belief in the maxims of revelation.”*

The body of religion may be enlarged by political associations, but the enlargement resembles that of the human body by a dropsy; the invigorating spirit declines, and leaves the patient an easy prey to corruption.

“ Religion, if it have any power, operates on the conscience of men. Resting solely on the be-

* Berington on the Rights of Dissenters, as quoted in the Monthly Review for August, 1789.

lief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumult of worldly policy.”*

“To one who is once persuaded, that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be the saviour and the king of those who believe in him, *all his commands become principles*; there needs no other proof of the truth of what he says, but that he said it: and then there needs no more but to read the inspired books to be instructed; all the duties of morality lie there clear, and plain, and easy to be understood.”†

One main position in every rational and consistent scheme of religious liberty, is, *that instruction and persuasion, are the only means which ought to be employed to propagate religion, or to render it permanent where it has been propagated.* Religion may be considered in two respects, as first in the *abstract*, in which it consists of a body of truth, and moral discipline adapted to enlighten and renovate the minds of men, release them from guilt and misery, and restore them to rectitude and happiness: or secondly, in the *concrete*, and then it appears actually producing the various and ma-

* Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press, &c. 81.

† Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures, 233.

ifold fruits of righteousness, as its natural and necessary results. In each instance, the wrath of man is alike unable to promote the righteousness of God. Fanatical tyrants, by desolating the earth, are not likely to obtain revelations of mercy from heaven; and supposing such revelations to be already in their hands, can they more directly oppose them, than by enforcing them by measures directly hostile to their nature and tendency?

Any religion which admits of being aided by deceit and oppression, affords thereby a strong presumption of its bad original and evil nature. According to etymologists, the *word religion*, denotes *obligation*, an obligation it is, which emanates from our dependance on a supreme power; a *sacred* obligation, not produced by human legislation, but by divine authority; not resting on our local or national circumstances, but on our belief of what is unseen, on our sense of God's high and awful perfections, and on our internal perception and approval of what is just, pure, and praise-worthy. Like that sublime principle which puts the spheres in motion, it lies hid from the eyes of mortals, and is discoverable in its operations and effects only. When princes and governments interfere with the truths and institutions of religion, it is well if they do not draw a line of separation between them and the power by which they operate. The result which experience warrants us to expect from the junction of civil government

with religion, is the reciprocal injury of each. What was the advantage of Constantine's establishment? Did it purify the sources and extend the streams of public justice? If it did not improve the political circumstances of the Romans, did it meliorate their morals? Did it elevate their minds above vicious pleasures, and render them superior to terrestrial hopes and fears? Did religion appear *clear as the sun, fair as the moon*, and to the partizans of error and wickedness, *terrible as an army with banners*? Nay, was not the splendour of truth obscured, and the discipline of morals relaxed? If no advantage accrued either to the church or the state, to public justice or private morals, it may be asked with confounding emphasis, *cui bono*? Ought the civil establishment of christianity by Constantine, ever to have taken place? Were political establishments of religion merely useless, they would be much less guilty than what they are. Many of the feuds which have distracted and wasted kingdoms, are to be placed to their account. They have supplied the services of vestal virgins to the fires of religious jealousy. It is true a spirit of persecution may exist where there is no establishment; but it can do but little harm; the tyger is chained; he may show his love of carnage, but cannot indulge it, and therefore must starve.

“ Turn a christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation,

full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, when the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendour, opulence and power, which they are the means of supporting. *To this alliance of christianity with civil power, is it owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which, left to itself had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.**

“The case stands thus,” says Doctor Jeremy Taylor, that great and benign luminary of a dark age:—“In the best times, amongst the best men, when there were fewer temporal ends to be served, when religion and the pure and simple designs of christianity only were to be promoted; in those times, and among such men, no persecution was actual, nor persuaded, nor allowed, towards disagreeing persons. *But as men had ends of their own and not of Christ's, as they receded from their duty, and religion from its purity, as christianity began to be compounded with interests, and blended with temporal designs, so men were persecuted for their opinions.* This is most apparent, if we consider when persecution first came in, and if we

* Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press, &c. 84.

observe how it was checked by the holiest and wisest persons."*

That order of things under which the professors

* *Liberty of Prophesying*, 206.—Doctor Jeremy Taylor was the son of a barber of Cambridge, where he received his education. On entering into orders, he became divinity lecturer of St. Paul's London; and was, by the interest of Archbishop Laud, elected fellow of All-souls College Cambridge, 1636. Two years after, Laud bestowed on him the rectory of Uppingham in Rutlandshire. He partook of the vicissitudes which attended the civil wars. In 1642, he was chaplain to the King, and a frequent preacher before him and the court at Oxford. On the decline of his Majesty's cause, he retired into Wales, where he was allowed to officiate as a minister, and to keep a school to support himself and his family. In this retirement, he wrote several of his works. Here too, he had the misfortune to lose three sons, of great hopes, in the course of a few months. This affliction caused him to move to London, where he officiated in a private congregation of loyalists. In London, Lord Conway met with him and took him to Portmore in Ireland where he wrote his *Ductor Dubitantium*. Soon after the *Restoration*, he was advanced to the bishopric of Down and Connor, and had the administration of the see of Dromore granted to him. He was likewise made privy-counsellor, and vice chancellor of the university of Dublin. He died of a fever at Lisnegarvy in 1667, and was interred in a chapel which he had built on the ruins of the old cathedral of Dromore.

Encyclopædia Britannica.

It is said that the *Liberty of Prophesying* was the first book written in the English language in favour of liberty of conscience. The genius and the industry, the private virtues and the public spirit, of Doctor Taylor were equally admirable, and it is much to the honour of the church of England that a man of such sentiments and dispositions rose, by his merit, to her principal dignities.

of a certain religion *only* are eligible to offices of power, of trust, and of emolument, is at once an evil itself, and a cause of many other evils. Hence it is, that the established religion ceases to appear encircled with the majesty and awfulness of immortality, and presents itself graced with some petty appendage of time, the favour of the mighty; a commission in the army, navy, or revenue; or a seat in a legislative assembly. Hence it is, that in all ages, to the major part of the gentlemen so dignified and remunerated for the obsequiousness of their faith, every thing like seriousness and conscientiousness in religion has, for the most part, been matter of jest and merriment.

When subscription to a creed is made a term of qualification for an office, a dereliction of that creed, ought to be attended with a forfeiture of the office. There are certain common principles of morality which enter into the essence of all religions; and is he who deliberately and formally violates these, trust-worthy, because he lyingly professes them?

It is more than probable, that a man who practises duplicity and deceit in his religion, will, if his interest so require, practise them any where else; and therefore, if in the affairs of this world, we repose additional confidence in any man on account of his religious profession, we ought to see that it is such a profession as involves the love of justice, and betrays no symptoms of hypocrisy.

The penal discipline of established churches, is not compatible with that fear of giving offence,

which ought to shew itself in the conduct of Christ's disciples. "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."—"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."* Christ here calls his disciples in general, little ones or children, as he had just before assured his mistaken and aspiring followers, that unless they were converted, and rendered as little children, they should not enter the kingdom of heaven. To *offend* any one, is to put in his way a cause of stumbling.† For legislative authority and secular force to interfere, by bribes and penalties, with "what conscience dictates to be done, or warns me not to do," is surely to put a cause of stumbling in my way. Whoever does this, be he pagan, jew, or christian, may see his doom in the words of him, who is yet to be his judge. Nay, in this mode of offence, especially if the offender bears the christian name, there are aggravations of guilt, not to be equalled in any other method of temptation to sin.

A considerable part of our Lord's ministry was taken up in preaching the kingdom of heaven; in doing which, he spake as never man spake; yet his manner was unobtrusive and modest, mild and benignant. Prejudice rendered many who heard him as "the deaf adder that stoppeth her

* Matthew, xviii. 6, 7.

† Levit. xix. 14. Isaiah, viii. 14.

ear ;" he called, but they refused, he stretched out his hand, but they would not regard : did he constrain attention, or smite them with present death, because they would not receive the offers of eternal life ? No ; but he set good and evil before them, and apprized them, that the " hour was coming in which all who are in their graves shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation ;" and left them to their choice. The gospel does not promise to the elect, a monopoly of the honourable, the easy and the lucrative offices of this life.

Had it been the pleasure of Christ to make proselytes to the truth as they have been often made since the days of Constantine, he could have effected the purpose with dignity ; he who fed the multitude with five barley loaves and a few small fishes, could, by the same means, have supported large armies ; and he who controlled the winds and the waves, could have made them the transports of his forces, before whom it might be expected, the affrighted nations would instantly submit, and one universal church enclose every human being. Our Lord had a fine opportunity of beginning this splendid career of conquest and conversion, when the grateful and enthusiastic multitudes would have taken him by force and made him a king. How puny and despicable are those aids which persecutors have derived from human violence, in comparison with those which

the divine omnipotence could have afforded! Christ wrought miracles, and authorized his apostles to do the same, as the credentials of their embassy: it seems that more was not congenial with the nature and design of the kingdom of heaven: and if, in the days of the son of man, the minds of unbelievers might not be awed into submission by the prodigies of divine power, they surely ought not, in any subsequent period, by the atrocities of human violence.

On religious grounds, there is no more need of an establishment of religious teachers, than there is, on political grounds, of an establishment of linguists, astronomers, or mathematicians. In fact, there is scarcely any one thing, in which the legislature might not interfere, with much more propriety and much better effect, than in religion. The life, the health, the time, and the property of each man, are of much more importance to the government under which he lives, than his religion is. Yet men are allowed to waste their time, squander their property, impair their health, and abridge their lives, without being called to account by the ruling powers; but if they go to one place of worship rather than another, they come immediately under the censure of penal laws. Let no man ascribe these partial laws to religion, to justice, to policy, or to common sense; they are disowned by each, and can boast no higher original than the prejudices of dark ages.

The imposition of an established religion,

necessarily interferes with the principles of that just and true,—that equal and impartial liberty, which is the greatest boon of human society. If we cannot avoid errors and abuses, we may, in many instances, correct them; but this is excessively difficult when they are interwoven with the articles and institutions of a state religion; for, *where the word of a king is, there is power*. Religious establishments are not more injurious to civil society than they are to religion itself; for it is observable that true piety is never more languid, and less thought of, than when the church is in her greatest vigour and glory: when her enemies are made to lick the dust, her friends will riot in the pleasures of wickedness.*

* The words of Doctor Hartley are very remarkable, the more so, as he was a learned and conscientious churchman, and a fellow of one of the Cambridge Colleges:—"There are many prophecies, which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the christian world. And though each church seems to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted; yet it is very plain, that the prophetic characters belong to all. They have all left the true, pure, simple religion; and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are all merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp. They have all a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do not receive their own mark, and worship the image which they set up.—They have all received money, like Gehazi; and therefore the leprosy of Naaman will cleave to them, and to their seed for ever."

Observations on Man, Part II. Prop. 82, 370

CHAPTER VI.

History of Intolerance from the death of Constantine the Great, to the complete dissolution of the Western Empire in Augustulus.

THE death of Constantine was as placid, as his life was active and his reign eventful. His person was majestic, his constitution vigorous, and his mind cheerful; and though familiar with scenes of peril, it was his happiness to enjoy the blessings of health and energy, until the sixty-third year of his age, when he was seized with an intermitting fever.

He sought relief from his disorder in the tepid baths of Constantinople; he thence removed, for change of air and scenery, to Helenopolis, a city he had raised in honour of his mother; and thence to the palace of Apuyrion, in the suburbs of Nicomedia, where he closed his splendid and triumphant reign in peace.

Among those, whose names and actions are emblazoned in the records of time, there are few, if any, of whom more repugnant representations have been given, than of Constantine the Great. Eutropius, who was secretary to Constantine, and who afterwards bore arms under Julian, says, that in the former part of his reign, he was

equal to the most accomplished princes, and in the latter, to the meanest. Victor, who published a historical treatise, *De viris illustribus urbis Romæ*, divides his reign into three periods, and affirms, that in the first, he was a hero, in the second, a robber, and in the third, a spendthrift. There can be no doubt, but that by these two accusations, Victor intended the spoliation of the pagan temples, and the endowment of the christian churches. Zosimus, who flourished at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries, and who exceeded Entropius and Victor in zeal for the honour of the gods, takes every opportunity of ascribing evil attributes to Constantine, and of avenging, on the fame of the imperial apostate, the insults he had offered to the ancient divinities of the empire. It is some consolation, however, that the encomiums of Eusebius, if less pointed, are equally extravagant as the invectives of Zosimus.

He who investigates history, not to imbibe or confirm prejudices, but to acquire just ideas of men and things, will pay a ready tribute of respect to the active talents and princely achievements of Constantine. The honours to which he attained, were not thrown in his way by the caprice of fortune, but obtained by the ascendancy of enterprising genius and laborious merit.

It ought not to be mentioned to the reproach of Constantine, that he was mistaken in several of the most important measures of his policy ; for in

what age or nation, did there at any time exist a man or a prince, so wise, so great and so good, as to be thereby rendered infallible? Had the emperor foreseen the fatal consequences of transferring the imperial court from Rome to Byzantium, of parcelling out the nations subject to the empire among his sons and nephews, and of squandering the resources of the state in the endowment of a church, it is likely that he would have been averse to each of those projects. It is probable, that pompous descriptions of the happy results of destroying idolatry, establishing the church of God, and of protecting and enriching his ministers and representatives, were given to the emperor by those bishops who made no scruple to abuse his confidence and bounty, and to employ his power in making war on each other. How was the emperor to know, except by experience, that in nursing the church, he cherished a serpent?

The three sons of Constantine, by the empress Fausta, were called by the kindred names, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans; but kindred names were found but a feeble restraint against fraternal discord, and the whole empire, after profusely bleeding in a series of civil wars, was reunited under Constantius, in the seventeenth year of his reign. In the year 355, Constantius was induced by the exigencies of the empire, and the intreaties of his empress Eusebia, to raise Julian to the dignity of Cæsar, and to give him Helena, the emperor's sister in marriage. Julian, with the

exception of the emperor himself, was the only surviving male branch of the house of Constantius Chlorus, and he soon proved himself capable of reviving the glory of his deceased ancestors. It is probable that the retired situation and adverse circumstances in which this prince was educated, contributed, in no small degree, to the forming of those habits of moderation, firmness and prudence, by which he eluded many snares, and gained many advantages. Six years, Julian was confined with his unfortunate brother Gallus, in the strong and spacious castle of Macellum, near Cæsarea. Gallus, who was six years older than Julian, was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, in the year 351; but he soon proved himself, by the weakness of his understanding and the violence of his passions, inadequate to the duties of his station. After the death of Gallus, Julian spent six months in exile at Athens, where he indulged his passion for literature in the groves of the Academy, and commanded the admiration of the philosophers, by the suavity of his manners, and the docility of his mind; and it was with real or affected reluctance, that he obeyed the imperial summons, which called him from exile at Athens, to be invested with the ensigns of empire at Milan.

When accoutred with the insignia of power, Julian was sent to Gaul where the Roman power was almost suppressed by the numbers and valour of the barbarians. The jealousy of the emperor, inflamed by unworthy ministers, imposed disagree-

able restraints on the young Cæsar; but he soon proved himself equally capable of rendering abortive the insidious arts of perfidious friends, by his discretion, and the open assaults of his avowed enemies, by his courage. Julian was ignorant of government and of life, except in theory; but in defiance of his want of experience, and in defiance of the mean artifices resorted to, by the agents of the emperor not immediately under his control, to impede his designs, he rose superior to all obstacles, vanquished, in successive engagements, with unequal numbers, the fierce invaders of his provinces, and diffused by his agility, temperance and heroism, new life through the languishing empire.

Constantius was in the bloom of life, when the empress prevailed on him to remember with justice and kindness, his amiable cousin: six years after, he was taken with a slight fever, occasioned probably by the perturbation of his mind, while marching against Julian, and expired after a short illness, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the twenty-fourth of his reign. The character given of Constantius is, *that he inherited the defects, without the abilities of his father.* He unfortunately followed the example of his father, in endeavouring by *anti-apostolic* methods to make his own religion the religion of the empire, and in so doing, conferred on Arianism, the advantages of imperial protection and patronage, and inflicted on society, the evils of discord and civil war. Constantius

enacted several laws relative to religion; by one, he forbade the worshipping of idols, under pain of death; by another, he ordered that all the property of those who left christianity to embrace judaism, should be confiscated; and by a third, he freed all merchandizing ecclesiastics, with their wives, children, and domestics, from all sorts of taxes and imposts.*

Some months antecedent to the death of Constantius, Julian in opposition to his earnest and reiterated expostulations, had been compelled to accept the dangerous title of *Augustus*, by the ardent and seditious devotion of the armies he commanded. The eunuchs, who had exerted a pernicious influence over the mind and the counsels of Constantius, made some efforts to prolong their authority, by electing an emperor congenial with their wishes,

* General History of the World, Vol. V. 15, 17.—By a law of Constantius, dated A. D. 358, all pretenders to divination, whether magicians, augurs, or astrologers, were declared enemies to mankind; and such as were found in the court of the emperor or of Julian, were doomed to the rack. In the year following, Constantius instituted a court of inquisition against the consulters of heathen oracles. Paulus Catena, a noted and cruel informer, was despatched into the east, to prosecute them; and Modestus, then Count of the East, and equally remarkable for his cruelty, was appointed judge; his tribunal was erected at Scythopolis, in Palestine, whither persons of both sexes, and of every rank and condition, were daily dragged in crowds from all parts, and either confined in dungeons, or torn to pieces by racks in a most cruel and barbarous manner, or publicly executed.—*Encyclopædia Britannica*, article *Constantinople*.

but their negotiations were rejected by the army, who lost no time to assure Julian, that every sword in the empire should be drawn at his command. The fame of Julian was become general, and rose high at Constantinople itself, the inhabitants of which, poured out to Heraclea, a distance of sixty miles, to meet and welcome their new sovereign, who, notwithstanding his youth and inexperience, had subdued the warlike hosts of Germany, and extended his conquests from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Bosphorus.

Julian was in the thirty-second year of his age, when he came to the undisputed command of the Roman world. As soon as he had performed with decent respect, the obsequies of the late emperor, he applied himself with the utmost assiduity to abolish useless offices, to reduce the taxes, to restore the ancient religion, and to subdue the numerous and formidable enemies of the empire.

The opprobrious title of *Apostate*, by which this prince is so well known, was dictated rather by the hatred than the justice of those who bestowed it. The crime of which Julian was guilty, prior to his avowal of paganism, seems to have been dissimulation, a crime, which loses many of its aggravations, when penal laws impose restraints on the free expression of opinion; and it is probable, that had not this prince dissembled the ascendancy which paganism had in his mind, he would have paid for his honesty by the total loss of his

liberty, and of the advantages of his birth if not of his life. There is no shape in which hypocrisy is not odious; and those laws which render the practice of it necessary, cannot but be bad.

It has been supposed that infidels have in some cases rejected the doctrines of the gospel from an aversion to those pure morals without which they cannot be consistently professed. It does not appear, however, that this was the case with Julian, whose morals were much less exceptionable than those of his imperial uncle and cousin. It is likely, therefore, that Julian's aversion to christianity originated in the caricatured representations of it which he saw in the contending churches of his time, and in the revolting scenes of deceit and violence with which, in his view, it was associated. This prince, unhappily, had not an opportunity of becoming acquainted with those christians (of whom no doubt there were many) who, removed from the *arena* of strife and artifice, practised the mild, and unobtrusive virtues of their profession. It had been happy for Julian had he considered, that the cruelties which made him an orphan and an exile were flagrant violations of the gospel; that the names of Christ and Constantius were totally unconnected, and that the just character of christianity was to be learned, not from the creeds, councils, and contentions, of Arians and Athanasians, but from those *holy oracles* whose professed

object is *to make us wise unto salvation*.* Eusebius, the Arian bishop of Nicomedia, was Julian's chief tutor, for whom, it would seem, the royal pupil entertained but little respect, and who probably disgusted him, by obtruding on him with an air of authority, the subtle speculations of the popular controversies. "The fierce contests of the eastern bishops, the incessant alterations of their creeds, and the profane motives which appeared to actuate their conduct, insensibly strengthened the prejudice of Julian, that they neither understood nor believed the religion for which they so fiercely contended. Instead of listening to the proofs of christianity with that favourable attention, which adds weight to the most respectable evidence, he heard with suspicion, and disputed with obstinacy and acuteness, the doctrines for which he already entertained an invincible aversion. Whenever the young princes were directed to compose declamations on the subject of the prevailing controversies,

* Le Clerc formed a very low estimate of the councils called by the emperors. "Weak princes," says that critic, "as far from being good as wise, assembled a pack of paltry Greeks, who had spent their lives in the art of cavilling about words, without the least knowledge in things; so very fond of wrangling, that they were eternally in feuds among themselves. To these were added some few from the west, more stupid and ignorant indeed, but not a whit more honest; who after much scandalous quarrelling did at last, by their own authority, establish certain unintelligible propositions, in such terms as were for the most part very improper." Perhaps this criticism might have been less severe, and at the same time, equally just.

Julian always declared himself the advocate of paganism, under the specious excuse that, in the defence of the weaker cause, his learning and ingenuity might be more advantageously exercised and displayed.*

It is probable that the philosophic attainments of Julian were rather showy than substantial; yet the suddenness with which he rose to the summit of human greatness, left him in the full possession of his understanding, and he still continued brave in the face of danger, and temperate in the use of power. The emperor's well known hatred to a religion which he had been constrained, by tyranny, to profess, and his devotion to that which had been very unfairly used by his immediate predecessors, might render plausible the suspicion that he would scatter and humble the enemies of the gods by the same weapons which had proved successful against the enemies of the commonwealth. But the youthful legislator soon dissipated the gloomy forebodings of guilt and fear, by a sweeping edict, which extended to all, whether jew, gentile, or christian, whether orthodox or heterodox, liberty to believe and act in matters of religion just as they pleased.

The pagan temples which had suffered from time, neglect, or imperial decrees, were restored, and every part of the world presented, according to the glowing description of Libanius, "the

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. 23. 67.

grateful prospect of flaming altars, bleeding victims, and the smoke of incense, with a solemn train of priests and augurs, without fear, and without danger. The sound of prayer and of music was heard on the tops of the highest mountains; and the same ox afforded a sacrifice to the gods and a supper for their joyous votaries."

The emperor recalled from exile the victims of persecution who had been sentenced to banishment in the preceding reign, restored them to their privileges, and exhorted them to live in peace.

Elusius, the bishop of Cyzicum, had taken the liberty of throwing down the Novatian meeting-house in that place, which Julian commanded him, under a severe penalty, to rebuild, at his own expense, and in the space of two months.*

But while this emperor was anxious to avoid the infamy of being reputed a persecutor, and as-

* Socrates Eccles. Hist. Book iii. Chap. 1. and 9.—The following anecdote is related of this prince—"A father had disinherited his son in consequence of his having renounced christianity for paganism. Julian ordered them into his presence, when he thus addressed the father. *I think nothing more unreasonable than the use of force when religion is concerned. Allow your son to follow one different from yours, as I do you to profess one different from mine; though I could easily oblige you to renounce it.* What, replied the father, *can you speak in favour of a wretch detested by heaven, who has preferred falsehood to truth, and abjured the faith of the true God, to bend the knee before an idol?* To this the emperor answered, *Invectives are here ill placed; and then addressing himself to the son, Since your father is deaf to your entreaties, and pays no regard to my recommendation, I will take care of you.*"—Mavor's Universal History, Vol. vii. 27.

pired to the singular fame of being an impartial judge and protector to every class of his subjects, he showed on many occasions the obliquity of his mind, and harassed the christians, without allowing them to rise, by their sufferings, to the honours of saintship and martyrdom. He removed, at intervals, many officers who were of the christian profession from respectable stations in the state and in the army, under the pretence, that it was unlawful for them to use either the sword of war or of justice. He shut up the schools in which the learned christians had been accustomed to teach grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy; alleging, that those who refused to worship the gods of Homer and Demosthenes, ought to be content with expounding Luke and Matthew in the Galilean churches.* The law, which required that the christians should restore to their pagan brethren the temples and sacred utensils they had rapaciously taken from them, was just; but, as for the most part, it fell to the lot of pagan magistrates to put this law in execution, they took upon themselves the liberty of exceeding the commands,

* It is supposed that the emperor did this with the design of ensuring to the fragile cause of polytheism the advantage of ignorant adversaries. But this design was soon defeated by the industry and talents of Apollinaris who amply compensated the loss of profane literature by turning the books of Moses into heroic verse in imitation of Homer. His son produced an imitation of Plato by turning the Evangelists and Acts of the Apostles into elegant dialogues.—*Socrates Eccles. Hist. Book iii. Chap. 10, 14.*

and of putting into effect what they conceived to be the secret wishes of their imperial master.

It is to the eternal reproach of Julian, that when some christians complained to him of the illegal exactions of his ministers, and sought redress, he told them, *that when injuries were offered to them, they ought to bear them patiently, because it was a part of their religion to do so.** Under the reign of Constantius, Mark, the Arian bishop of Aretusa, demolished the idolatrous temple in that place; the ministers of Julian demanded of the prelate the full value of the sacred edifice which had fallen before his destructive zeal; but Mark gloried in his achievement, and refused to make any, even the slightest, restitution: the magistrates, therefore, laid violent hands on the person of the aged bishop, beat him with rods, tore his beard, anointed him with honey, and suspended him in a basket in the air, to be scorched by the sun and tormented by insects. The sufferer still refused to rebuild the temple, or pay a fraction towards it; he was at length taken down from his painful elevation, and allowed to enjoy, through the remainder of his life, the honours of his victorious constancy. This shameful repulse taught the officers of Julian to be somewhat more gentle and cautious in their proceedings against the bishops.

It is mentioned, to the honour of Julian, that with the power of the empire at his command, he

* Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book iii. Chap. 12.

entered the lists against the defenders of christianity with weapons which afford no advantage to a prince above a subject. While busily employed in making his formidable preparations to invade Persia, and subjugate the implacable enemies of the empire in their own country, he spent his leisure hours in endeavouring to sap, by argument and ridicule, the firm foundations of the christian religion. The rhetorician Libanius is of opinion, that in this arduous undertaking, the youthful Julian far excelled the grey-bearded Porphyry.*—The well-known fact, however, that this prince, with all his freedom of thought, and aversion to implicit faith, was a firm believer in the absurdities of magic, divination, and witchcraft, will not allow the modern critic to form any very favourable estimate of his intellectual labours.

In that farrago of superstitious conceits which in the time of Julian was blended with the glorious truths and simple institutions of the gospel, there was, no doubt, much to excite disgust; but, was not the chief part of it derived from that very religion which Julian considered divine, and of which he was proud to be the zealous protector?

It ill became the emperor to revile Jesus of Nazareth, while at the same time, he revered the rabble of Olympus.

If a wise prince were to make choice of a state religion, and in doing so, were to consult the happiness of his subjects, we should suppose that he

* *Spec. Eccles. Hist. Book iii. Chap. 19.*

would select a religion that required little money and little time for its own support, and which inspired its votaries with hatred to idleness, intemperance, and injustice. Paganism was too gross not to be expensive; and Julian, though in other cases by no means lavish of the public money, yet, when employing the revenues of the state in honour of the gods, was shamefully profuse.—Birds, of the rarest kind, and of the richest hue, were brought from the most distant parts of the earth, to bleed upon their altars; and the sacrifices of horned cattle were so numerous, that the extinction of the species was anticipated by a popular sarcasm. Did the emperor imagine, that his predecessors had starved the immortal gods; and that, therefore, it was incumbent on him to offer, in greater abundance, the fumes of substantial victims, and the odours of costly incense, in order to repair their exhausted strength, and revive their enfeebled senses?

The admirers of Julian must acknowledge that the number, the variety, and the costliness, of the oblations which he offered to the gods, prove that he was either weakly superstitious, or culpably extravagant.*

* Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, Book xxiv. Chap 10, affirms, that *since the reign of Julian there has not been a prince more worthy to govern mankind*—an assertion which, if just, throws great dishonour on many a dynasty of kings; for the good qualities of Julian were not so great, or so exquisite, as to be inimitable; nor were his defects and faults so few, or so trivial, as to be classed with the unavoidable frailties of human nature.

The encouragement which this emperor gave to the jews to return to their land, and rebuild their temple, has been ascribed to various motives; to his scheme of religious liberty, to his love of glory, and, to his desire of confounding christianity, by falsifying the prophecies relative to the dispersion of the jews, and the desolation of the temple. The scattered *outcasts of Israel*, as might be expected, instantly rallied, and entered with ardour into the design of their imperial benefactor; implements of the richest materials were provided, and all hands were emulous in the glorious work; but the rubbish was scarcely removed, when the undertaking was completely frustrated, either by the sudden death of the emperor, or the miraculous interposition of providence. Ammianus Marcellinus, who, if in this case he wrote, not from vulgar report, but from his own knowledge, must be considered as an unexceptionable witness, ascribes it to the latter cause.—“Whilst Alypius,” says the historian, “assisted by the governor of the province, urged with vigour and diligence, the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and the victorious element continuing in this manner obstinately and resolutely bent as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned.”

Julian had carried the war against Sapor into

the heart of Persia, where after being greatly embarrassed and weakened in consequence of his own imprudence, and the perfidy of his guides, he was killed by the arrow of a Persian soldier. The dying emperor, with whom the house of Constantius Chlorus became extinct, referred the election of a successor to the free suffrage of the army and the empire.

If, as is affirmed, the choice of the army was fixed on Jovian by the arts of divination, his elevation to the imperial dignity must be considered as a rather singular occurrence, inasmuch as he was a professed christian. It is greatly to the honour of Jovian, that though, during his short reign, he showed himself a steady friend to christianity in opposition to paganism, and to the consubstantialists in opposition to the Arians, yet he maintained universal toleration and impartial liberty. The intrepid Athanasius, who had already outlived hosts of his adversaries, was once more restored to the archiepiscopal throne of Alexandria.

The emperor was found lifeless in his bed. Some ascribed his death to his having drunk too much wine and eaten too many mushrooms; and others to suffocation in his sleep caused by the fumes of a charcoal fire with which his room was aired. He was succeeded by Valentinian who soon after his election conferred the title of *Augustus* on his brother Valens, and allotted him the præfecture of the east. These princes though so nearly allied by birth, differed very materially in

nature, and exemplified their characteristic qualities in their respective governments.

“The most honourable circumstance of the character of Valentinian,” says Mr. Gibbon, “is the firm and temperate impartiality which he uniformly preserved in an age of religious contention. His strong sense, unenlightened, but uncorrupted by study, declined, with respectful indifference, the subtle questions of theological debate. The government of the *earth* claimed his vigilance and satisfied his ambition; and while he remembered that he was the disciple of the church, he never forgot that he was the sovereign of the clergy. Under the reign of an apostate, he had signalized his zeal for the honour of christianity: he allowed to his subjects the privilege which he had assumed for himself; and they might accept, with gratitude and confidence, the general toleration of a prince addicted to passion, but incapable of fear. The pagans, the jews, and all the various sects which acknowledged the divine authority of Christ, were protected by the laws from arbitrary power or popular insult; nor was any mode of worship prohibited by Valentinian, except those secret and criminal practices, which abused the name of religion for the dark purposes of vice and disorder.”*

But while Valentinian held the reins of justice, with a tolerable steady and equal hand over the provinces of the west, his colleague committed

* *Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxv. 261.*

many acts of ill-natured bigotry and misrule in the east. The abettors of the Arian creed were too few and too feeble, in the west, to wage successful warfare with the defenders of the Nicene faith; but in the east, the militant factions were pretty nearly balanced as to numbers and strength, and were on that account, it would seem, the more ready to commence hostilities. Both the Arians and the consubstantialists were so perfectly imbued with the spirit of exclusive establishment, that neither considered themselves perfectly free, unless indulged with the delicious privilege of persecuting each other; and it seems that they alike considered the toleration of jews and pagans as a stain on the glory of the church. Valens for a while imitated the impartial conduct of his brother; but on his declaring war against the Goths, the emperor, who as yet, had risen no higher than the class of catechumens, deemed it expedient to receive the ordinance of baptism, and for that purpose, addressed himself to Eudoxus, the Arian bishop of Constantinople. From this time, the emperor of the east, being of a timid disposition and weak understanding, became the dupe of Arian artifice and zeal, and was prevailed upon to debase the imperial authority by employing it to reclaim the *Athanasian heretics* from their schismatical errors. "At first, he pitied their blindness; by degrees, he was provoked at their obstinacy; and he insensibly hated those sectaries to whom he was an object of hatred." The

emperor's zeal against the speculative delinquency of the consubstantialists was attested by their exclusion from public offices, their disgrace, their exile, by depredations committed on their estates, and in some instances, by torture and death. On the decease of Endoxus, who lived to be very old, the Arians elected to the vacant see one Demophilus; the Athanasians, on the other hand, who were by no means remiss in their duty, installed Evagrius. A tumult ensued, in which the Arian faction, by the help of the soldiers, came off victorious, and the orthodox but unfortunate Evagrius was banished. Valens was at this time at Nicomedia, whither repaired a deputation, consisting of no less than eighty ecclesiastics, to complain of the injuries they had sustained from the Arians; but the emperor, in the room of listening with respectful attention to their case, and redressing their grievances, was greatly exasperated at them, and gave secret instructions to the præfect Modestus to have them put to death. The præfect was too prudent to attempt executing the savage orders of his master in the city, and therefore commanded the deputies to go aboard a vessel, which was prepared, as was pretended, to convey them into banishment; but as soon as they were out of the harbour, the mariners, according to the instructions they had received, set fire to the vessel, and made their escape in the boat.*

* Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book iv. Chap. 13.

The Novatians too, were unjustly used by Valens, notwithstanding their having abstained from any participation in the broils of the contending factions. Even the monks, who cured diseases, and ejected devils, in the remote solitudes of Egypt, were visited by the ministers of Valens, and compelled to exchange the easy and reputable avocations of the monastic life, for the low drudgery of imperial service.*

But of all objects of commiseration, witches and wizards have the strongest claims to our pity. It is a surprising thing, if the art of witchcraft, be not an art of imposing on human credulity, but a real endowment, that it should bring to its possessor, so few *real advantages*. Why does not the starven hag, when she enters into compact with the devil, and obtains the sublime and mysterious privilege of controlling the seasons of the year and the orbs of heaven, obtain at the same time, the power of getting a piece of bread?

But as the laws of Valens and Valentinian were directed, not only against the lives, but also against the *estates*, of such as were guilty of witchery, magic, and divination; the great, the noble, and the wealthy, were accused and convicted. The mischievous assiduity of spies and informers spread consternation and dismay through the empire; the retirements of domestic life were scru-

* Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book iv. Chap. 19.

tinized in search of obnoxious books, and all volumes, containing circles or lines, figures of animals, hieroglyphicks, or delineations of the human body, were considered as incontestable proofs of their owner's guilt. "From the extremity of Italy and Asia, the young, and the aged, were dragged in chains to the tribunals of Rome, and Antioch. Senators, matrons, and philosophers, expired in ignominious and cruel tortures. The soldiers who were appointed to guard the prisons, declared, with a murmur of pity and indignation, that their numbers were insufficient to oppose the flight, or resistance of the multitude of captives. The wealthiest families were ruined by fines and confiscations; the most innocent citizens trembled for their safety; and we may form some notion of the magnitude of the evil, from the extravagant assertion of an ancient writer, that, in the obnoxious provinces, the prisoners, the exiles, and the fugitives, formed the greatest part of the inhabitants."*

Valentinian was the first emperor who enacted laws to restrain the immoderate acquisitions of the clergy. His death was caused by the bursting of a large blood-vessel, while he was transported with anger. About three years after, Valens was killed by the Goths, at the battle of Adrianople.

On the death of Valens, the empire of the east, which was plunged in wretchedness by the recent

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxv. 253.

triumphs of the Gothic barbarians, devolved to Gratian, who was then in the twentieth year of his age. After the lapse of a few months, Gratian invested Theodosius, who was afterwards surnamed the *Great*, with the purple and the diadem, and resigned to him the throne of Valens.

The father of Theodosius, who was a general of distinguished bravery, had taken pains to initiate his son in the art of war, a branch of education, of the utmost importance to a Roman emperor, at the close of the fourth century. After serving the empire in a series of arduous and splendid actions, the father of Theodosius ended his life on a scaffold at Carthage, to which he was condemned by Gratian, through the insidious malice of calumniators. On the tragical death of his amiable and illustrious father, Theodosius, who had already risen to the rank of duke of Mœsia, requested permission to retire to his paternal inheritance in Spain. From the delightful pursuits of agriculture and learning, Theodosius was called to the toils and honours of government.

The competence of this emperor to the high duties of his station is attested by his courage in the field, his address in the cabinet, and by the general success of his measures in a time of great perplexity and peril; but the part he acted, as the head of a religious society and the defender of the Nicene faith, challenges for his name a conspicuous place in the annals of intolerance.

Though the emperor had been trained up in the profession of the christian religion, he declined baptism, until the close of the first year of his reign, when he was taken dangerously ill at Thessalonica. He immediately sent for Ascolius, bishop of that place, and having interrogated him concerning the articles of his faith, received from him the ordinance of baptism.* The emperor's convalescence is dated from his baptism. Before he was well recovered from his illness, he proceeded to defend the faith as an emperor which he had just professed as a christian, by an edict to the following effect:—"It is our pleasure that all the nations, which are governed by our clemency and moderation, should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans; which faithful tradition has preserved; and which is now professed by the pontiff Damasus, and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the discipline of the apostles, and the doctrine of the gospel, let us believe the sole deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; under an equal majesty, and a divine trinity. We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of *catholic christians*; and as we judge, that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of *heretics*; and declare, that their conventicles shall no longer usurp the respectable

* Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book v. Chap. 6.

appellation of *churches*. Besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties, which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them."

It is probable, that a considerable portion of the legal intolerance which disgraced the reign of Theodosius is to be ascribed to the zealous assiduity of certain bishops, who considered the favour of an orthodox emperor a talent of too much value to be innocently neglected. "The mind of Theodosius," says the historian of the Roman empire, "was confirmed by a theological argument, adapted to the rudest capacity. He had lately bestowed on his eldest son, Arcadius, the name and honours of Augustus; and the two princes were seated on a stately throne to receive the homage of their subjects. A bishop, Amphilo-chius of Iconium, approached the throne, and after saluting, with due reverence, the person of his sovereign, he accosted the royal youth with the same familiar tenderness which he might have used towards a plebeian child. Provoked by this insolent behaviour, the monarch gave orders, that the rustic priest should be instantly driven from his presence. But while the guards were forcing him to the door, the dexterous polemic had time to execute his design, by exclaiming, with a loud voice,—"*Such is the treatment, O Emperor ! which the King of heaven has prepared*

for those impious men who affect to worship the Father, but refuse to acknowledge the equal majesty of his divine Son." Theodosius immediately embraced the bishop of Iconium, and never forgot the important lesson which he had received from this dramatic parable.*

Our common parents lost their innocence and happiness by aspiring to *be as gods*; and the same method of temptation has been frequently repeated with fatal success. Had some one taken the liberty of suggesting to Theodosius, that though an emperor he was still a man, that the minds and consciences of his subjects were not amenable to his tribunal, and that it was no part of his duty to give, in this world, a specimen of what will take place in the world to come, he would have acted the part of a sincere friend to him.

Theodosius, on his accession to the empire of the east, found the Athanasian cause almost extinct in several of the principal cities of his dominions. This was especially the case at Constantinople, where the churches of the Nicene faith were reduced to an obscure conventicle. The unpopular cause of Athanasius, however, was strenuously supported by the zeal and eloquence of Basil of Cæsarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus. The latter accepted an invitation from his christian brethren of the metropolis, and boldly

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxvii. 16.

declared the proscribed truth in the midst of established error. The conventicle which was the scene of Gregory's undaunted and indefatigable labours, was called *Anastasia*, to signify the resurrection of the orthodox faith. The Arians soon took alarm at the abilities and impudence of the uncourtly missionary, who presumed to inveigh against the established religion in the very seat of empire; and the Anastasian conventicle was fiercely assailed by a various crowd of "*beggars, who had forfeited their claim to pity; of monks, who had the appearance of goats and satyrs; and of women, more terrible than so many Jezebels.*" But the congregation of Gregory increased under the storms of intolerance, survived the insolence of their persecutors, and raised their heads with triumph, when they were informed that the new emperor had received the rite of baptism from an orthodox bishop. Their glowing expectations were not disappointed; for the day after, the emperor made his public entrance into the imperial city at the head of his victorious legions, he summoned Damophilus the Arian prelate, into his presence, and proposed to him the imperious alternative of conforming to the Nicene faith, or of resigning to the consubstantialists, the episcopal palace, the cathedral of St. Sophia, and all the churches of the city.* Damophilus preferred exile to conformity, and Gregory rose at

* Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book v. Chap. 7.

once, from the obscurity and indigence of the Anastasian conventicle, to the splendour and wealth of the archiepiscopal throne. In the mind of Gregory, however, the joys of victory were greatly damped by the grief, rage, and despair, depicted in the menacing countenances of the vanquished. The orthodox emperor, by sending into banishment so many Arians who refused to submit to the religious authority he exercised, made them more zealous to disseminate their opinions, and gave them an opportunity of diffusing the poison of deadly error among barbarous nations, and of opposing obstacles to the future propagation of truth.

In the year three hundred and eighty-two, the emperor called a council of orthodox bishops at Constantinople, in order to confirm the canons of Nice, and to define more accurately the boundaries of the true faith. The loquacity of the Greeks must have been amply gratified by the agitation of a controversy which the disputants could not exhaust, because they could not understand.

But it was not merely in defence of the incommunicable attributes of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that the emperor exerted his authority; all the various sects of the empire, however distinguished, were required to break down their petty enclosures, and to come into the catholic church. "It was not enough that Theodosius had suppressed the insolent reign of Arianism, or that he had abundantly revenged the injuries

which the catholics had sustained from the zeal of Constantius and Valens: the orthodox emperor considered *every* heretic as a rebel against the supreme powers of heaven, and of earth; and each of those powers might exercise its peculiar jurisdiction over the soul and body of the guilty. The decrees of the council of Constantinople had ascertained the true standard of the faith; and the ecclesiastics, who governed the conscience of Theodosius, suggested the most effectual methods of persecution. In the space of fifteen years, he promulgated at last, fifteen severe edicts against the heretics; more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the *trinity*; and to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted, that if any laws or rescripts, should be alleged in their favour, the judges should consider them as the illegal productions, either of fraud or forgery. The penal statutes were directed against the ministers, the assemblies, and the persons of the heretics; and the passions of the legislator were expressed in the language of declamation and invective. First, the heretical teachers, who usurped the sacred titles of *bishops*, or *presbyters*, were not only excluded from the privileges and emoluments so liberally granted to the orthodox clergy: but they were exposed to the heavy penalties of exile and confiscation, if they presumed to preach the doctrine, or practise the rites, of their *accursed* sects. A fine of ten pounds of gold (above four hundred pounds

sterling,) was imposed on every person who should dare to confer, or receive, or promote a heretical ordination; and it was reasonably expected, that if the race of pastors could be extinguished, their helpless flocks would be compelled, by ignorance and hunger, to return within the pale of the catholic church. Secondly, the rigorous prohibition of conventicles was carefully extended to every possible circumstance, in which the heretics could assemble, with the intention of worshipping God and Christ, according to the dictates of their conscience. Their religious meetings, whether public or secret, by day or by night, in cities, or in the country, were equally proscribed by the edicts of Theodosius; and the building or ground which had been used for that illegal purpose, was forfeited to the imperial domain. Thirdly, it was supposed, that the error of the heretics could proceed only from the obstinate temper of their minds; and that such a temper was a fit object of censure and punishment. The anathemas of the church were fortified by a sort of civil excommunication, which separated them from their fellow-citizens, by a peculiar brand of infamy; and this declaration of the supreme magistrate, tended to justify, or at least to excuse, the insults of a fanatic populace. The sectaries were gradually disqualified, for the possession of honourable or lucrative employments; and Theodosius was satisfied with his own justice, when he decreed, that as the Euno-

mians distinguished the nature of the Son from that of the Father, they should be incapable of making their *wills*, or of receiving any advantage from testamentary donations. The guilt of the Manichæan heresy was esteemed of such magnitude, that it could be expiated only by the death of the offender; and the same capital punishment was inflicted on the Audœans, or Quarto-Decimans, who should dare to perpetrate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an improper day, the festival of Easter. Every Roman might exercise the right of public accusation, but the office of *inquisitors of the faith*, a name so deservedly abhorred, was first instituted under the reign of Theodosius. Yet we are assured, that the execution of his penal edicts was seldom enforced; and that the pious emperor appeared less desirous to punish, than to reclaim or terrify, his refractory subjects.”*

While the theory of persecution was artfully arranged by the wisdom of the *Homoousian* prelates, and the authority of Theodosius, in the east, the practice of it gave birth to some dishonourable proceedings in the west. Priscillian, a man distinguished by the advantages of a liberal fortune, and a liberal education, and, at this time, bishop of Abila in Spain, was accused of heretical wickedness. It is not easy to say wherein the heresy of Priscillian consisted; but he is accused of gnosti-

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxvii. 31.

cism, magic, and lasciviousness—of teaching that the earth is the production of an evil spirit, that the soul is a part of the divine nature, that the body ought not to be indulged, because it is the prison of the soul, and that the actions of men are governed by the stars; it is likewise said, that he denied the resurrection, recommended the *Apo-crypha*, and exhorted his followers to make use of lying and perjury when necessary to serve their interests. It is probable that the worst of these charges originated in the license of using falsehood and defamation in the cause of truth; but innocent or guilty, the enemies of Priscillian obtained a rescript from the emperor Gratian, which banished him from Spain. He was afterwards restored by an edict of the same prince to his country and flock. But his sufferings were not yet over. Maximus, who commanded the forces in Britain threw off his allegiance to his sovereign, and Gratian, who was then in Paris, too inattentive to the affairs of the empire, fell an easy sacrifice to the prosperous treason of his rival. Priscillian, now, without a protector, was summoned before a synod held at Bourdeaux, by which he was condemned. The sentence of the synod was confirmed by the consistory of Maximus held at Treves, and Priscillian, with six of his principal adherents, resigned themselves to torture and death.

The chief instigator of this atrocious prosecution was Ithacius, bishop of Sassuba, whose character, according to Sulpicius Severus, was no ornament

to his profession. "He was a man abandoned to the most corrupt indolence, and without the least tincture of true piety. He was audacious, talkative, impudent, luxurious, and a slave to his appetite. He accused as heretics, and as protectors of Priscillian, all whose lives were consecrated to the pursuit of piety and knowledge, or distinguished by acts of mortification and abstinence."

It is honourable to those two great lights of the western churches, Martin of Tours, and Ambrose of Milan, that they totally disapproved, and strenuously reprobated, the conduct of their intolerant brethren, and refused to hold any religious intercourse with them.*

* We should be happy in the belief that the conduct of these illustrious men was homogeneous and honourable throughout; but Mr. Gibbon, whom it is vain to despise, insinuates that they were *humanely inconsistent*; and affirms that the former "marched, at the head of his faithful monks, to destroy the idols, the temples, and the consecrated trees of his extensive diocese; and that, in the execution of this arduous task, the reader will judge whether Martin was supported by the aid of miraculous powers, or of carnal weapons."

Decline and Fall, &c. Chap. 28. 105.

The liberality of the latter is called in question by the following incident.—"The monks and populace of Callinicum, an obscure town on the frontier of Persia, excited by their own fanaticism, and by that of their bishop, had tumultuously burnt a conventicle of the Valentinians, and a synagogue of the Jews. The seditious prelate was condemned, by the magistrate of the province, either to rebuild the synagogue, or to repay the damage; and this moderate sentence was confirmed by the emperor. But it was *not* confirmed by the archbishop of Milan. He dictated an epistle of censure and

The heart of Gratian was the abode of manly and generous dispositions; and while his inexperienced youth was guided by the prudent counsels of some virtuous preceptors, who had presided over his education, the government of the west was administered with wisdom and energy. When deprived of his faithful guardians, the flexible and unsuspecting Gratian became the dupe of parasites and adventurers, who humoured his foibles, inflated his vanity, and alienated from him the affections and confidence of his subjects. He was killed in the twenty-fifth year of his age, and in the eighth of his reign. A law is ascribed to Gratian which declared null and void all exemptions and emoluments granted by other emperors to pagan priests and vestal virgins. It is likewise af-

reproach, more suitable, perhaps, if the emperor had received the mark of circumcision, and renounced the faith of his baptism. Ambrose considers the toleration of the jewish, as the persecution of the christian, religion; boldly declares, that he himself, and every true believer, would eagerly dispute with the bishop of Callinicum the merit of the deed, and the crown of martyrdom; and laments, in the most pathetic terms, that the execution of the sentence would be fatal to the fame and salvation of Theodosius. As this private admonition did not produce an immediate effect, the archbishop, from his pulpit, publicly addressed the emperor on his throne; nor would he consent to offer the oblation of the altar, till he had obtained from Theodosius a solemn and positive declaration, which secured the impunity of the bishop and monks of Callinicum."—*Ibid.* Chap. 27. 68.

A little reflection on the maxim of the schools, that *more and less do not alter the species* might correct some mistakes which have done the world much mischief.

firmed, on the authority of Zosimus, that Gratian was the first christian emperor who declined the honour of being Pontifex Maximus to the pagan divinities.

In rejecting the flowing robe of the supreme pontiff, the emperor showed that he was not actuated by caprice but by a sense of propriety; for he assigned as the reason of his conduct, *that it was not consistent with the principles of the christian religion to wear that habit.**

The dangers which menaced the provinces of the east, hindered Theodosius from revenging the death of his amiable benefactor in the west, and at the same time, induced him to receive ambassadors from the usurper Maximus. But the tyranny of the base assassin of Gratian was not of long continuance; his ambition soon prompted him to violate the solemn assurances he had given to Theodosius, that he would *not* disturb the tranquillity of the provinces assigned to Valentinian II. brother to the late emperor. This young prince, and his mother, the empress Justina, were in Milan, when their repose was suddenly interrupted by the hostile approach of Maximus, through the passes of the Alps. Not being prepared to resist the barbarous and warlike forces of the invader, the young emperor, and aged empress, proceeded, with the utmost speed, to crave the assistance of the great Theodosius. The il-

* General History of the World, Vol. V. 50, 51.

lustrious fugitives ended their voyage, which was prosperous, at Thessalonica, where they were visited by the emperor of the east, attended by the chief part of the court and senate. As yet, Justinian and Valentinian had been the friends and protectors of Arianism: Theodosius, after tenderly sympathizing with their afflictions, gently reminded them, that their sufferings *might* be the consequence of their heresy, and persuaded them to engage on their side the powers of heaven and of earth, by embracing the *true* faith.

The empress had been too long entangled in the trammels of delusion to be easily disengaged; but the flexible mind of the young emperor was, at once, diverted from the doubtful speculations of Arianism, which had already involved him in calamities, to the authoritative decisions of Nice, whose happy consequences were conspicuous in the prosperity of Theodosius.

The cautious policy of Theodosius, caused him still to hesitate, before he led the armies of the east, already exhausted by defending themselves against hordes of barbarians, to encounter the hardy legions of Maximus, rendered desperate by former crimes, and daring by recent success. It was happy for Valentinian, in this juncture of his affairs, that he had with him his beauteous sister, Galla, whose charms, heightened by distress, powerfully and effectually pleaded his cause in the heart of Theodosius. We are pleased to find, that it was not in the power of camps and creeds

to render the breast of Theodosius callous to the impressions of beauty. The artful Justina fanned the flame of love, and no longer doubted of success, when the mighty emperor of the east, whose fame was divulged through distant nations, became her son-in-law. No sooner were the imperial nuptials celebrated, than the provinces of Theodosius, from north to south, presented the lively scenes of preparations for war, both by land and sea; the result of which was, the defeat and death of Maximus, and the restoration of Justina and Valentinian, with augmented glory, to their rightful dominions and prerogatives.

During the absence of Theodosius from Constantinople, an occurrence took place there, which proved that his generous qualities, and gentle manners, had not healed the wound inflicted by the alienation of the Arian churches. Reports were industriously circulated, that the armies of the east were foiled by forces of the west, and that Theodosius himself was on the point of becoming the captive of Maximus: the resentful populace rose, and set fire to the palace of Nectarius, the orthodox bishop, who perished in the midst of the flames.* It is probable, that the emperor was the more easily prevailed on to pardon this outrage, by a consciousness that a part of the guilt of it devolved to himself.

But of all the occurrences which signalize the

* Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book v. Chap. 13.—General History of the World, Vol. V. 58.

reign of Theodosius, the rapid decline, or rather, the total and irreparable overthrow of the ancient religion of the empire, is the most memorable.—Considering how splendid and popular the Roman religion once was, this is an event which has scarcely any parallel in the history of nations. “All people,” says the prophet Micah, “will walk, every one in the name of his God;” and the prophet Jeremiah speaks of the abandonment of idols as a thing which was no where to be seen: “Pass over to the isles of Chittim, and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing; hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?” To see, therefore, an ancient and splendid religion, connected with a thousand lively and pleasurable associations, sink neglected into oblivion and contempt, is no vulgar sight. The causes and circumstances of a revolution, so singular, and so important, cannot but be interesting.

The origin and progress of idolatry have ever been interesting topics of disquisition with the curious. There can be no doubt, but that the worship of idols was, originally, much less gross than what it came to be in process of time. Its sources may, probably, be found in the mutilated remains of primæval tradition—in a sense of weakness, a consciousness of guilt, and the experience of adversity—in the arts of priests and legislators—in casual incidents—and, in the indulgence of a lux-

uriant imagination, by men intent on pleasure and superstition.

The fabric of paganism resembled a rude structure, raised, at different periods, by unskilful architects, and ill adapted to brave the fury of the storms which, after a long and deceitful calm, assailed it. The heterogeneous materials of which the system of Roman polytheism was composed, had no principle of coherence, except the vague recognition of the powers above, and the emoluments granted by the powers below; the former commanded but little respect, and the latter changed with the times.

The power of habit is great, but not invincible; and it is a very easy thing for a rising generation to break through the prejudices and unpopular customs of their declining ancestors.

A passing glance at the accredited characters and achievements of the Greek and Roman divinities is enough to excite surprise that they so long commanded the homage of enlightened and polished nations, and is a convincing proof of the imbecility and incompetence of reason, while unaided by revelation, in matters of religion.

The ancient poet Hesiod wrote on the *generation of the gods*, a bold subject, yet not so full of dignity as might be imagined. Jupiter, frequently styled *the father of the gods*, was himself the son of Saturn, and would have been devoured by his unnatural sire, but for the tenderness and ingenuity of his mother Rhea or Cybele. Having escaped the voracious jaws of his father, Jupiter was pro-

tected and nourished in a cave of Mount Ida in Crete, by the Curetes, or Idæi Dactyli. Minerva, or Pallas, clad in shining arms, sprang from the brains of Jupiter; and Venus, the fair patroness of love and beauty, rose from the impure surf of the agitated sea.

The actions of the gods were of equal honour and majesty with their descent. Jupiter, notwithstanding his high attributes of *optimus* and *maximus*, committed many deeds not compatible either with greatness or goodness. Juno, queen of heaven, notwithstanding the gentleness of her sex, was relentless and cruel in her capricious resentment against the Trojans. The actions ascribed to Venus are too indelicate and lascivious to please any but the most abandoned and dissolute. Even the *chaste* Diana was unable to keep her vows. The history of the graceful Apollo is fraught with many ungracious adventures. The orgies which commemorate the exploits of Bacchus were strange scenes of intemperance and riot to constitute a branch of divine worship. Mars who inspired his votaries with the spirit of conquest, was overcome by Venus. And Mercury not only performed servile offices, but also practised and patronised knavish tricks.*

* The laws given by Zaleucus to the ancient Locrians, were introduced by the following preamble:—"No man can question the existence of the Deity, who observes the order and harmony of the universe, which cannot be the production of chance. Men ought to bridle their passions, and to guard against every vice. God is

Who could plead the cause of such deities without impeaching at once his understanding and his morals? Yet the orators, Libanius and Symmachus, exerted all the powers of their learning and rhetoric to prolong the existence of the ancient religion. The latter introduced the tutelary genius of Rome to dissuade the legislators over whom she presided from rash and dangerous innovations:—"Most excellent princes, fathers of your country," says the plaintive goddess, "pity and respect my age, which has hitherto flowed in an uninterrupted course of piety. Since I do not repent, permit me to continue in the practice of my ancient rites. Since I am born free, allow me to enjoy my domestic institutions. This religion has reduced the world under my laws. These rites have repelled Annibal from the city, and the Gauls from the capitol. Were my grey hairs reserved for such intolerable disgrace? I am ignorant of the new system which I am required to adopt; but I am well assured, that the correction

pleased with no sacrifice but a sincere heart; and differs widely from mortals, whose delight is in splendid ceremonies and rich offerings. Let justice therefore be studied; for by that only can a man be acceptable to the Deity."

Similar sentiments are to be found in the writings of many pagan sages; but they are grossly contradicted by the purest schemes of paganism with which we are acquainted. If as Cicero says, (*De Officiis*, lib. iii. sect. 6.) *justice is the mistress and queen of all virtues*, why did he worship gods, who in many instances, were models of injustice?

of old age, is always an ungrateful and ignominious office."

It was thought pious by the Romans, to ascribe prosperity to the favour of the gods, and adversity to their displeasure; and it was deemed right and fair to bring the merits of two rival religions to the test of utility. While the gods were honoured with splendid rites, and costly sacrifices, and their pleasure consulted with respectful deference, the Roman arms had triumphed on every element, and subdued, with equal ease, the artful prowess of the Greek republics, and the undisciplined fury of barbarian nations. By the vigilant and fostering care of the immortal gods, an obscure colony of shepherds, who pitched their tents on the banks of the Tyber, gradually rose to opulence and power; and an humble village became mistress of the world. But now, disastrous reverse! notwithstanding the awfulness of the imperial name, and the terror of so many legions constantly employed in her defence; *now*, that she had deserted her numerous and potent protectors, she was on the eve of becoming a prey to disorderly bands of robbers. This plausible, but fallacious method of supporting error and idolatry, obliged the ministers of the church to have recourse to common sense, and to show, that the conquests of Rome were sufficiently accounted for, by the bravery and discipline of her armies, without having recourse to a series of fictitious and absurd miracles. They were

likewise bold to maintain, that a veneration for the institutions and usages of our ancestors, which cramps the spirit of improvement, and extends the reign of ignorance and folly, is unworthy of enlightened men.

One of the first steps toward the demolition of paganism, was the removal of the altar and statue of the goddess, *Victory*, from the spacious hall, or temple, in which the senate assembled. She was sometimes represented as flying through the air, with a crown of laurel in one hand, and a palm in the other; and sometimes as standing on a globe, and animating her votaries to universal conquest. It was usual to introduce the deliberations of the senate with the oblation of wine and incense on the altar of Victory. This idolatrous exordium to public business greatly embarrassed such senators, as openly professed, or secretly espoused, the christian religion. The splendid but obnoxious idol was repeatedly displaced and restored; and, after her final deposition by Gratian, the pagan part of the senate made many, but fruitless, efforts for her recovery. The policy and politeness of Theodosius led him to pay a respectful attention to the wishes of the pagan senators; but nothing was farther from his intentions than to grant their requests, and he soon delivered himself from their disagreeable importunity. “In a full meeting of the senate, the emperor proposed, according to the forms of the republic, the important question, Whether the worship of Jupiter, or that of Christ, should be

the religion of the Romans? The liberty of suffrages, which he affected to allow, was destroyed by the hopes and fears that his presence inspired; and the arbitrary exile of Symmachus, was a recent admonition, that it might be dangerous to oppose the wishes of the monarch. On a regular division of the senate, Jupiter was condemned and degraded by the sense of a very large majority; and it is rather surprising, that any members should be found bold enough to declare, by their speeches and votes, that they were still attached to the interest of an abdicated deity.*

The senate was at this time little more than the shadow of departed liberty and greatness; still, however, the conversion of the major part of a body of men distinguished by wealth and rank, and supposed to concentrate the scattered wisdom and virtue of the ancient capital, could not but be attended with important advantages to the imperial church. The heroes of Rome were departed, but there was still a numerous population of idols; and upwards of four hundred temples yet remained to contaminate the air, and offend the senses of christians, with the fumes of idolatrous sacrifices and incense. An extensive change, exhilarating to the christians and gloomy to the pagans, immediately ensued. The decrees of the senate, by which the christian religion was received, and the worship of Jupiter rejected,

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. xxviii. 100.

were sanctioned by the general consent of the Roman people. The most ancient and noble families of the city, the Annii and Paulini, the Bassi and Gracchi, vied with each other in their zeal for the institutions of the church, and the Lateran and Vatican were thronged with an incessant crowd of lively worshippers. St. Jerome, who was at this time employed in instructing the Roman ladies, and who was no indifferent spectator of these events, declares, that the idols were every where pulled down, and their temples forsaken; that the gods, once so much revered, were left in their niches alone, or attended only by mice and owls; that the capitol, formerly so much frequented, was then turned into a desert, and the other temples covered with dust and filled with cobwebs; that the whole city crowded to the tombs of the martyrs; and that the people passing by the ancient temples, with joy beheld them ready to fall and bury the gods under their ruins. "*Rome,*" says the enraptured monk, "*forsakes Jupiter and his temples, despises his ceremonies, and is ashamed of the worship formerly paid him.*"

Prudentius, who consecrated his muse to the service of the church, describes and celebrates the conversion of the senate in the language of poetry: "the luminaries of the world, the venerable assembly of Catos, are impatient to strip themselves of their pontifical garments; to cast the skin of the old serpent; to assume the snowy robes of baptismal innocence; and to humble the pride of the

consular fasces before the tombs of the martyrs."

The arts, the opulence, and the greatness of the Romans, might be seen at one view, in those superb edifices, which in their superstitious zeal, they consecrated to the service of idolatry. The existence of so many strong holds of the prince of darkness, enriched and ornamented with the monuments of ancient art and the spoils of vanquished nations, was considered dangerous to the established church, and a sentence of condemnation was secretly passed against them.*

* A short account of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, may serve to give some idea of the magnificence of those structures which the Romans built in honour of their idols. The foundations of the Capitol were laid by Tarquinius Priscus; Servius Tullius raised the walls; and Tarquinius Superbus finished the majestic pile. *Sed gloria operis, libertati reservata.* But the honour of consecrating it was reserved for the consul Horatius Pulvillus. (Tacitus, Hist. iii. 72.)

The Capitol had the good fortune to be destroyed twice by fire, from which it rose with augmented strength and splendour. The two wings were sacred, the one to Juno, and the other to Minerva. In the nave stood the colossal statue of Jupiter, with his crown, his sceptre, and his golden thunderbolt.

The Capitol "was filled with the treasures of vanquished nations, adorned with the plunder of palaces and temples, and enriched with the spoils of the conquered world. It was in fact, the treasury of Rome, the deposit of the accumulated triumphs of ages of victory and conquest. Crowns, shields, and statues of gold, the offerings of kings, emperors, and heroes, blazed on all sides, and adorned with equal profusion, the interior and exterior of this palace of dominion, this throne of empire and religion. Its threshold was bronze, the valves of its portals were gold; the roof was bronze, but bronze

The prudence of the emperor, however, deterred him from giving up, at once, the rich and magnificent temples of Rome to be pillaged and destroyed ; the rage of the pagan faction would probably have burst through all restraints, on seeing the sacred majesty of the ancient capital effaced, by the sacrilegious hands of the christians. There was not the same necessity for caution in the provinces of the empire, where the temples of the gods were more thinly scattered, and where their worshippers were unable to assemble in bodies sufficiently large to disturb the peace. Cynegius, prefect of the east, was charged with a special commission against all places devoted to idolatrous uses. Cynegius executed his orders with so much zeal and fidelity, tempered with wisdom, that he abolished the worship of the gods, even in Egypt, the very soil of which was impregnated with idolatry.* Jovius and Gaudentius, in the west, were authorized to destroy the instruments of pagan superstition, and to enrich the army, the church, and the imperial exchequer, with the revenues of the gods.

It is to be lamented, that some of the finest doubly and triply gilt ; the pediment, sides, and summit of the roof, presented horses, chariots, heroes, and gods, the Roman eagle and its attendant victory, all of bronze, silver or gold, glittering to the sun, and dazzling the eyes of the spectator."

Eustace's Classical Tour through Italy, Vol. II. 98.

* Universal History, Vol. XV. 621.

efforts of ancient artists were devoted to no better object than the service of idols, and that the triumphs of the christian church involved the destruction of some of the noblest monuments of Greek and Roman architecture and sculpture.*

“ In Syria, the divine and excellent Marcellus, as he is styled by Theodoret, a bishop animated with apostolic fervour, resolved to level with the ground the stately temples within the diocese of Apamea. His attack was resisted by the skill and solidity with which the temple of Jupiter had been constructed. The building was seated on an eminence: on each of the four sides, the lofty roof was supported by fifteen massy columns, sixteen feet in circumference; and the large stones of which they were composed, were firmly cemented with lead and iron. The force of the strongest and sharpest tools had been tried without effect. It was found necessary to undermine the foundation of the columns, which fell down as soon as the temporary wooden props had been consumed with fire; and the difficulties of the enterprise are described under the allegory of a black

* The first essays of the Greeks in the art of statuary were rude. They first carved the heads only of their heroes and heroines; they next carved them in full, as large, and as perfect as life; and lastly they threw into their expression the dignity of gods and goddesses. Phidias excelled in this art, and was more expert at forming the statues of gods than those of men. So consummate was the skill of this artist, that it was doubted whether his images did not, in majesty and beauty, transcend their originals.

demon, who retarded, though he could not defeat, the operations of the christian engineers. Elated with victory, Marcellus took the field in person against the powers of darkness ; a numerous troop of soldiers and gladiators marched under the episcopal banner, and he successively attacked the villages and country temples of Apamea. Whenever any resistance or danger was apprehended, the champion of the faith, whose lameness would not allow him either to fight or fly, placed himself at a convenient distance, beyond the reach of darts. But this prudence was the occasion of his death : he was surprised and slain by a body of exasperated rustics : and the synod of the province pronounced, without hesitation, that the holy Marcellus had sacrificed his life in the cause of God.”*

Among the many sacred and stately piles which were levelled with the ground, by the laborious industry of the christians in the reign of Theodosius, the temple of Serapis at Alexandria deserves distinguished notice. Such were the beauty and majesty of this edifice, that it rivalled even the capitol itself. The god to whom the Serapium was dedicated, was not a native of Egypt, but, (if his history be not legendary,) was imported from Sinope in Pontus. It is somewhat strange, however, that the Egyptians should have ascribed to a divinity of foreign extraction, and unknown to

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. 28. 106.

their ancestors, the swelling of the Nile and the fertility of Egypt.

The honours of Serapis were allowed to survive those of his brethren, in consequence of the blessings, which successful artifice and ignorant credulity ascribed to his goodness. It is said, that even the christians were painfully apprehensive of the fatal consequences which might ensue on any insult being offered to the majesty of a god so great and so beneficent. A trifling incident accelerated the downfall of Serapis, and the demolition of his superb and richly ornamented temple.

Theophilus, whose virtues might have qualified him for the army better than the church, filled the archiepiscopal throne of Alexandria. In removing the rubbish from a dilapidated chapel of Bacchus, which he was about to convert into a church, the bishop found some obscene symbols, which he took the liberty of exposing in the public places, as indications of the devotion which had been practised in honour of the god of wine. The pagans considered this exposure, as an intolerable provocation, and immediately flew to arms; many of the christians suffered for the imprudent zeal of their bishop; but they soon took up arms in their own defence, and a civil war ensued, which was attended with much anarchy and bloodshed. It soon occurred to the worshippers of Serapis, to betake themselves to his temple, which from its vast dimensions and elevated site, was well adapted for a military fortress. The pagans were headed by a fanatical philosopher,

named Olympus, who exhorted them to be careless of their lives, in defence of their altars and gods. The christians, though far more numerous and powerful than their antagonists, were sorely harassed by their furious sallies from the sanctuary of Serapis, and such of them as were so unfortunate as to be taken prisoners, were put to the hard alternative of offering sacrifice to the idol, or of enduring the rack. In the mean time, the magistrates informed the emperor of the scenes of violence which disgraced their city, and exerted themselves to establish a truce between the contending factions, until the emperor's pleasure should be known, and the fate of Serapis decided.

The imperial rescript applauded the constancy, and extolled the happiness of those who had chosen to die, rather than renounce the truth, and offer incense to idols; and at the same time, pronounced a generous pardon on those deluded gentiles, to whose cruelty the christian sufferers were indebted for the crown of martyrdom.

This is not the only instance in which the judicious combination of clemency and rigour, aided the designs of Theodosius, and contributed to the reformation of the world. The act of grace which spared their lives, and pardoned their offences, caused the pagans to think more highly of the religion of their sovereign, and induced them to elude, by dispersion and disguise, the resentment of their fellow subjects.

There now remained no obstacles to oppose the final catastrophe of the Serapium, but such

as were presented by the strength of the structure, and the ponderous weight of its materials. The massy foundations resisted all the efforts of the assailants, who were obliged to content themselves with reducing the lofty superstructure to a heap of ruins.*

“The colossal statue of Serapis was involved in the ruin of his temple and religion. A great number of plates of different metals, artificially joined together, composed the majestic figure of the deity, who touched on either side, the walls of the sanctuary. The aspect of Serapis, his sitting posture, and the sceptre which he bore in his left hand, were extremely similar to the ordinary representations of Jupiter. He was distinguished from Jupiter, by the basket, or bushel, which was placed on his head; and by the emblematic monster, which he held in his right hand; the head and body of a serpent, branching into three tails, which were again terminated by the triple heads of a dog, a lion, and a wolf. It was confidently affirmed, that if any impious hand should dare to violate the majesty of the god, the heavens and the earth would instantly return to their original chaos. An intrepid soldier, animated by zeal, and armed with a weighty battle-axe, ascended the ladder, and even the christian multitude ex-

* Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book v. Chap. 16.—Prideaux's Connection, Part II. Book i.—Wilson's History of Egypt, Vol. I. 255.—Universal History, Vol. XV. 645.

pected, with some anxiety, the event of the combat. He aimed a vigorous stroke against the cheek of Serapis ; the cheek fell to the ground ; the thunder was still silent, and both the heavens and the earth continued to preserve their accustomed order and tranquillity. The victorious soldier repeated his blows ; the huge idol was overthrown, and broken in pieces ; and the limbs of Serapis were ignominiously dragged through the streets of Alexandria. His mangled carcase was burnt in the amphitheatre, amidst the shouts of the populace ; and many persons attributed their conversion, to this discovery of the impotence of their tutelar deity.

The popular modes of religion, that propose any visible and material objects of worship, have the advantage of adapting and familiarizing themselves to the senses of mankind ; but this advantage is counterbalanced by the various and inevitable accidents to which the faith of the idolater is exposed. It is scarcely possible, that, in every disposition of mind, he should preserve his implicit reverence for the idols, or the relics, which the naked eye, and the profane hand, are unable to distinguish from the most common productions of art, or nature ; and if, in the hour of danger, their secret and miraculous virtue does not operate for their own preservation, he scorns the vain apologies of his priests, and justly derides the objects, and the folly, of his superstitious attachment. After the fall of Serapis, some hopes were

still entertained by the pagans, that the Nile would refuse his annual supply to the impious masters of Egypt; and the extraordinary delay of the inundation, seemed to announce the displeasure of the rival god. But this delay was soon compensated by the rapid swell of the waters. They suddenly rose to such an unusual height, as to comfort the discontented party with the pleasing expectation of a deluge; until the peaceful river again subsided to the well known and fertilizing level of sixteen cubits, or about thirty English feet.* A principal branch of the famous Alexandrian library, the repository of the ancient literature of the world, was attached to the house of Serapis and perished with it.

From Alexandria, Theophilus, seconded by the governor of the province, and the commander of the Roman troops, proceeded to level with the ground the oratories, chapels, and gods of all Egypt. The forces of the bishop and of the emperor were attended with uninterrupted success, and derived far more substantial blessings from the destruction of the gods, than their votaries ever did from their worship. As the labours of Theophilus were animated, not merely by the sordid desire of idolatrous gold and silver, but also by the laudable ambition of putting idolatry to everlasting shame, he preserved the statue of a sa-

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxviii. 113.

cred ape as a memorial of the blind stupidity of pagans.

Some few of the most stubborn adherents of the exploded religion still continued to indulge their superstitious propensities. For this purpose they held convivial meetings, under the shade of consecrated trees, which afforded them an opportunity of enjoying religious intercourse, and of performing idolatrous ceremonies. But about the year three hundred and ninety, the emperor issued a law which declared it his pleasure that, *none of his subjects, whether magistrates or private citizens, however exalted or however humble might be their condition, should presume in any city, or in any place, to worship an inanimate idol, by the sacrifice of a guiltless victim*; which was so explained and enforced as to condemn, under the severest penalties, the slyest evolutions of the proscribed religion.

In the reigns of several of the pagan emperors, weighty penalties were inflicted on the versatile and perfidious christians, for deserting the gods of their forefathers; in the reign of Theodosius, the faithful pagan, who honoured his paternal gods with a few grains of incense, or with a libation of wine, exposed himself to forfeitures and fines sufficiently heavy to exhaust the most ample fortune. But here an interesting singularity presents itself. It is generally understood, and the opinion is well supported by matter of fact, that, irrespective of the merits of a religion, the dangers

which attend its profession, will inflame the zeal, and confirm the constancy of its professors. But christianity, while oppressed by the whole weight of the imperial government, not only kept its ground, but spread, and made fresh conquests; on the other hand, the religion of Romulus and Numa no sooner saw the powers of the world marshalled in hostile array against it, than it gave way, and yielded the palm.

In accounting for the different effects produced by the same causes, we cannot rationally admit, that omnipotence operated in some secret and mysterious way on behalf of the church, so as to cause the disparity; for in the third and fourth centuries, the pravity of the church was such as to forbid our supposing that it could be pleasing in the eyes of Jehovah, whose throne of mercy is established in justice and judgment.

If it is a dictate of natural conscience, that the authority of religion is superior to that of every human legislature, it was so completely effaced from the minds of the Romans, by the jargon of polytheism, that they yielded, with little remittance, to those laws which condemned the most modest and sequestered observance of their sacred rites.

Some of the causes of the extraordinary success which attended the persecuting edicts of Theodosius, are to be found in the religious character and profound policy of that prince. His morals were, for the most part, unexceptionable, and he seems

to have been sincerely and religiously devoted to the service of the church which he so zealously and indefatigably patronised. Of this he gave a convincing proof, in his ready and penitential submission to the humiliating penance prescribed him by the archbishop of Milan.

The natural temper of Theodosius was quick and choleric; of this frailty, the cruel massacre of seven thousand persons at Thessalonica, to punish a sedition, of which, the greater part of them were innocent, is a melancholy instance; yet, notwithstanding this malignant fire, which sometimes darted like lightning on the victims of his displeasure, Theodosius knew how to be indulgent and bountiful even to those who had reason to expect different treatment. He not only protected from injury and insult the wife and daughters of Maximus, but also supported them in a style answerable to their rank. The people of Antioch, after insulting the majesty of the emperor by defacing his statues, had occasion to erect new honours to his clemency. Such was the zeal of Libanius in the cause of paganism, that he seems to have identified his own happiness with its prosperity; yet, even Libanius applauds the moderation and munificence of Theodosius, fully sensible, that he might have used the friends of the ancient religion much worse than he did. Symmachus, the intrepid and eloquent advocate of the gods, was recalled from exile, and honoured with the consular dignity. Theodosius abolished a law, enacted by

one of his predecessors, which denounced death against such as spoke seditious words of the emperor, observing, *that, if such words proceed from levity, they are to be despised; if from folly, to be pitied; and if from malice, to be forgiven.*

While making preparations for a war with Eugenius who had been seated on the throne of the west by Arbogastes, the general and the assassin of the second Valentinian, Theodosius experienced the want of those oracles, on which he had imposed an ignominious silence. The deficiency, however, was happily supplied by an Egyptian hermit, by name John, who had already spent upwards of forty years, remote from the habitations of men, in an humble cabin, raised by his own hands, on the summit of a rugged mountain. The eunuch Entropius, was commissioned to sail up the Nile, and seek out the lowly mansion of the hermit, and learn from him the event of the approaching war. The sagacious recluse returned an answer to the emperor, equally adapted to inspire caution and courage; and the obstinate, but ineffectual resistance of Eugenius, justified the shrewdness or the inspiration of the prophecy.

Here again, the magnanimous clemency of Theodosius, shone forth in all its glory: the provinces of the west were implicated in the guilt of two enormous crimes; first, of tamely submitting to the assassin of their lawful sovereign, and to the usurper of his throne; and secondly, of impiously and presumptuously endeavouring to res-

tore the reign of paganism. But Theodosius was too wise to throw a shade over the splendour of his triumph, by reeking his vengeance on the vanquished; he seemed anxious only to re-establish peace and order, and to gain as complete ascendancy over the hearts of his enemies by his goodness, as he had done over their lives, by his greatness. It is doubtful, if the annals of mankind contain the name of any other prince, who directed the energies of a vast empire, with so much ability and perseverance to the annihilation of an obnoxious religion, as Theodosius the Great.

Still, however, it is undeniable, that a share of the glory of achieving and of rendering permanent this extraordinary revolution, is to be ascribed to the impious, but accommodating inventions of the ministers of the church. The gross spirit of polytheism could never be satisfied with mental worship, presented to an invisible and impalpable object, in the use of a few intelligible and unornamented institutions. The desideratum was soon supplied by appointing festivals in honour of the martyrs, and by adopting such rites of paganism, as were adapted to conciliate the prejudices, regale the senses, and delight the imaginations of pagans. The silent slumbers of the grave were interrupted by the officious zeal of missionaries; and the mouldering bones of prophets and evangelists were imported, in solemn processions, to feed the devotion, and secure the stability of the imperial church.

As the mortal remains of the righteous are composed of the same materials as those of the wicked, there is reason to think, that very unworthy objects were sometimes honoured with religious veneration. An instance of this error occurred in the diocese of Tours, where the skeleton of a malefactor was honoured as that of a martyr, until the inanimate wretch was constrained, by the miraculous powers of Martin, to confess his real character and genuine history. But as the magnitude of an absurdity enhanced the merit of faith, it rather aided, than obstructed, the growth of a species of devotion, so congenial with the spirit and the form of gentilism, and so admirably adapted to collect and fix its scattered votaries.

After the defeat and death of Eugenius, the whole Roman world, from the shores of the Caspian sea, to those of the Atlantic Ocean, did homage to the power, the wisdom, and the clemency of the great Theodosius.

The authority of a name so venerable, and associated with so many mighty acts, was of the utmost consequence for uniting the resources of a declining empire, and keeping in awe its warlike enemies. The age of the emperor, which was twenty years beneath the term of human life, might justify the pleasing hope, that the most useful and splendid part of his reign was then commencing; but all expectations were soon dissipated, by the progress of a dropsy, produced by the fatigues of the camp in the late war. Per-

ceiving in himself the symptoms of his approaching dissolution, Theodosius made his will, by which he divided the empire, confirming his elder son, Arcadius, then about eighteen, in the government of the east, and investing his younger son, Honorius, aged eleven, with the dominion of the west. The effeminate imbecility of these princes, and the selfish and ambitious arts of their guardians, Rufinus and Stilicho, reflected additional lustre on the vigorous administration of their august father. Theodosius gave a final proof of the benign and princely feelings of his nature, by confirming on his death-bed, the pardon of all who had borne arms against him, and by remitting a tribute of which his subjects had complained. He expired at Milan, in the sixteenth year of his reign, and in the fiftieth of his life; and his corpse, after being embalmed, was conveyed to the mausoleum of Constantine, where it was deposited with funeral magnificence, in a tomb of porphyry.

Before we take our leave of the fourth century, it ought to be mentioned, that some christians were treated with unpardonable severity by Sapor II. king of Persia, and by Athanaric, king of the eastern Goths. The former raised no less than three dreadful persecutions against the defenceless christians of his dominions. The odium of these iniquitous proceedings is chiefly due to the Magi, who persuaded their sovereign, that the christians were traitorously devoted to the interests of his enemies, the Romans. It seems too, that the se-

verity of the Gothic prince originated in a suspicion, that such of his subjects as had embraced christianity, were guilty of disaffection to him and attachment to the Romans. He therefore proposed, without losing time in the tedious formalities of judicial investigations, the stern alternative of conformity, or death. On this occasion, the Goths showed themselves men, by volunteering to help their christian neighbours to elude, by what appeared to them innocent artifices, the displeasure of their prince. But some christians refused to disguise their sentiments, and therefore suffered for their honesty. It is probable that Athanaric did not long cherish a spirit of hostility to the christians; for he was converted into an ally of the empire by the policy of Theodosius, and ended his days in peace, amidst the royal banquets, and luxurious indolence, of the eastern capital.

The Fifth Century.

The fourth year of this century is remarkable for the persecution of Chrysostom, the popular and eloquent patriarch of Constantinople. John, surnamed Chrysostom, or *golden mouth*, was a native of Antioch, the capital of Syria: his parents, who were opulent and respectable, gave him a liberal education, and designed him for the profession of the law. But the early piety of

Chrysostom rendered him averse to the life of a barrister; and he was easily prevailed on, by the exhortations and authority of Meletius, bishop of Antioch, to devote his splendid talents to the service of the church. The aspiring ardour of Chrysostom had to contend with the infirmities of a feeble constitution, and a morose temper; both of which, it is probable, were increased by his steady perseverance in hard study, and by his submitting, for six years, to a rigid course of monastic discipline. On his return to society, he commanded the applause of the church, by the fame of his sanctity, by the ardour of his zeal, and by the rhetorical vehemence of his sermons.

In the year four hundred and one, the patriarchal throne of Constantinople was rendered vacant by the death of Nectarius, and the city was agitated by the turbulent and ambitious arts of the rival candidates. It so happened, that the ruling eunuch, Eutropius, while at Antioch, had become acquainted with the powers and virtues of Chrysostom; he therefore despatched a letter to the governor of Syria, requesting, that the preacher of Antioch might be sent to Constantinople, with the utmost speed and secrecy. The instructions of Eutropius were punctually attended to; and Chrysostom had no sooner appeared in the imperial city, than his presence suppressed all competition, and the judicious choice of the eunuch was ratified by the ready consent of the clergy, of the court, and of the people.

The augmentation of dignity is sometimes attended by the diminution of happiness: this, it would seem, was the case with Chrysostom, who as he was better acquainted with books than with men and things, was soon embarrassed with the difficulties of his new situation. He was accused of being proud; and some of his actions render it probable, that he had not yet learned, to combine the meekness of wisdom with the intrepidity of courage. He was resolved, however, to maintain his integrity, and to denounce, if he could not reform, the manifold and complicated vices of the imperial city. Riches, greatness, and courtly splendour, were unable to protect their guilty possessors from the faithful and pungent rebukes of the undaunted patriarch; and the vicious monks and bishops, who disgraced their sacred profession by their disorderly conduct, soon found, that they had an overseer who would not connive at their faults. In a pastoral visit to the provinces of Lydia and Phrygia, Chrysostom silenced and ejected no less than thirteen bishops; and boldly declared, that avarice and licentiousness had spread their dire contagion, through the whole episcopal order. The clergy of Constantinople had provided for their domestic comfort, by introducing females into their houses: in reprobating this dangerous practice, the zeal and austerity of the patriarch unfortunately prompted him to depreciate the weaker sex in general, and to utter some expressions which seemed to reflect on the beautiful em-

press herself. Thus Chrysostom, fearless of consequences, and conscious of the purity of his motives, and the rectitude of his intentions, prosecuted the arduous duties of his exalted station.

In the mean time, the conspiracy, which was formed against him, approached to a crisis. Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, had long envied the fame of Chrysostom and the rising majesty of Constantinople; and, from the dark and insidious qualities of his mind, was ever ready to engage in any enterprise likely to obscure the former or impede the latter. Encouraged, therefore, by a private communication from Eudoxia, the empress, he hastened to Constantinople, with a retinue of dependant bishops, to try, condemn, and depose Chrysostom. The sentence of this venal synod was confirmed by Arcadius, and the venerable patriarch was rudely arrested to be conveyed into exile.

These proceedings filled the populace of Constantinople with wild amazement, which, for a short time, made them silent and passive; but their enthusiastic devotion to a pastor, who had diligently laboured to feed them with the bread of heaven, and whose diffusive bounty had ministered to the supply of their temporal necessities, was soon published by the flames of sedition. The treacherous and wily Theophilus narrowly escaped with his life; the monks and mariners of Egypt, who were prepared to take the field under his standard, paid for their temerity with their blood; and the

haughty Eudoxia was compelled, by the surrounding storm, to throw herself at the feet of Arcadius, and to implore the restoration of the injured patriarch, as the only measure which could restore the public tranquillity. The return of Chrysostom was attended with the rapturous exultation of his friends; but his enemies, though obliged to yield, were not totally vanquished; and they proceeded, without much delay, to concert more effectual measures of hostility. Another synod of obsequious bishops was convened by the influence of Theophilus; and a second interdict denounced against Chrysostom for his contempt of ecclesiastical authority, in resuming his pastoral functions without being absolved from the judgment of the former synod.* At the same time, the emperor, or rather those who governed in his name, took care to have the peace of the capital secured by the presence of foreign troops. The final banishment of the patriarch now became inevitable; and he submitted

* Socrates, in the sixth book of his history which is chiefly devoted to Chrysostom, mentions the boldness with which he censured the heathenish custom of honouring the statue of the empress which was erected in the vicinity of St. Sophia. He is reported to have begun his sermon on this occasion with a very personal introduction:—*Herodias is again furious; Herodias again dances; she once more requires the head of John.* But the homily and the exordium are rejected by the critics as spurious.

After perusing Doctor M'Crie's Life of John Knox, the reader may, if he pleases, amuse himself by tracing some resemblances between the patriarch of Constantinople and the reformer of Scotland, and between the empress Eudoxia and Mary queen of Scots,

to his deportation with that ease and dignity which added to the lustre of his character. The remote village of Cucusus, situate among the barren summits of Mount Taurus, was fixed on as the place of his exile. In the year four hundred and seven, his guards were ordered to remove him to the distant wilderness of Pityus, but he died on the route.

Eudoxia expired while in the bloom of youth, and Arcadius did not long survive her; he left his throne to his son Theodosius II. then in the seventh year of his age.

After the demise of Theophilus, the archiepiscopal see of Alexandria was filled by his nephew, Cyril, a youth who emulated the aspiring and litigious turbulence of his uncle. In addition to the domestic advantages with which Cyril might have been favoured, he was further prepared for the church and the world, by five years familiar converse with the monks of Nitria. Having stored his memory with the lore of abstruse theology, and brightened his wit by the practice of disputation, Cyril gladly threw off the coarse attire of the hermit for the showy robes of the preacher. The populous and splendid metropolis of Egypt was a fit theatre for the display of his talents. His lofty eloquence, commanding voice, and powerful connections, alike contributed to advance his popularity, and to cherish the fires of enthusiasm and intolerance which slumbered in his breast.

Cyril had not been long possessed of the ho-

nours and emoluments attached to the spiritual sovereignty of Alexandria and Egypt, before he added to his sacred prerogatives the licence of a secular despot. A band of desperate zealots were ready to commit any outrage under the episcopal standard; they first assailed the churches of the Novatians, plundered them of all that was valuable, and robbed their chief minister of his personal substance: they next assaulted the jews who had been encouraged to settle in the city by wise and generous princes, and to whose industry and address its commercial greatness was mainly attributable. The jews were not less than forty thousand; but as they did not expect the attack, they were unprepared to resist; their toleration and privileges, confirmed by successive charters, were flagrantly violated; their synagogues demolished, and their houses pillaged; many of them killed, and the remainder banished.

The enormity of this episcopal outrage is in some degree extenuated by the injuries which the christians had sustained from the jews in some riots which had taken place a short time before; but Cyril ought not to have been the first to avenge the excesses committed by the jews, as those excesses were caused, in a great measure, by his impertinent interference and barbarous menaces. Orestes, prefect of Egypt, espoused the cause of the jews, and complained to the court of the anarchy caused by the violent conduct of Cyril, and of the injury done to the city by the expulsion of a

numerous and active body of merchants and tradesmen; but the ministers of the little Theodosins were too intent on the *ignes fatui* of superstition, to attend to the vulgar concerns of peace and justice.

It was no sooner known among the fraternity who peopled the adjacent mountains, that Orestes had taken part with the jews against Cyril, than a powerful troop of them descended to plead the cause of their bishop. They met Orestes in his chariot in the streets of Alexandria, and reviled him under the opprobrious names of pagan and idolater; to allay their rage, he solemnly assured them, that he was a christian, and had received the rite of baptism from Atticus, of Constantino-ple, who was an orthodox prelate; he was answered by a volley of stones, which scattered his guards, and one of which struck him on the head, and covered him with blood; the citizens interposed and rescued their prefect, and delivered up to his justice the hermit who had inflicted the wound on him; and Orestes, after expostulating with the savage, sentenced him to expire under the hand of the executioner.*

* We may judge of the mental perfections of the monks of Egypt from a controversy which arose among them early in the fifth century. The major part of them ascribed to God the figure and members of man, on which account they were called *anthropomorphites*. Theophilus had taken the liberty before the congregation of inveighing against the opinion which ascribed to God the shape of man; but the boldness of the archbishop exposed him to danger;

But Cyril was not yet overcome: he ascended the pulpit, and extolled the zeal and courage of Ammonius; commanded that his body should be removed from its ignoble grave to the cathedral, that the honours due to a martyr should be offered to it, and that the name of the glorified Ammonius should thenceforward be *Thaumasius*, or the *admirable*.

These proceedings of the primate of Egypt were well adapted to bring about an occurrence which soon after transpired. There flourished at this time in Alexandria, a lady, by name Hypatia, of the most extraordinary accomplishments. She was the daughter of Theon, who was president of the famous Alexandrian academy, and who took care to have her instructed not only in such branches of learning as usually constitute a female education, but also in the whole circle of useful and polite literature. To the graces of youth and beauty, of modesty and politeness, she added consummate skill in the most abstruse sciences. On the death of her father, she was chosen to preside over the academy, and to teach out of the chair from which Ammonius Saccas, and Hierocles had taught. The fame of her wisdom and eru-

for when the religious men of the desert heard of his opposing their sentiments, they assembled at Alexandria in such numbers, and with such deadly designs, that Theophilus was obliged to dissemble his creed, and to curse the works of Origen, in order to appease the angry passions of the monks and to deliver himself from death.

Socrates. Eccles. Hist. Book vi. Chap. 7.

dition spread through Europe, Asia, and Africa, and persons, the most distinguished for wealth and rank, crowded the academy to hear her lectures.

But Hypatia was so unfortunate as to profess the Greek religion, and to be held in high estimation by Orestes, who frequently consulted her on emergencies of state. The celebrity of Hypatia was a source of vexation to Cyril, who is suspected, with much reason, of being accessory to her tragical death. As she returned home in her chariot (it was in the midst of the ember days), Peter the reader with a party of his brethren rushed upon her, pulled her out of her chariot, dragged her to the church of the Cæsareum, stripped her naked, flayed her alive, mangled her flesh with sharp oyster shells, and to conclude the diabolical tragedy, carried her quivering limbs to a place called Cinaron, and burned them to ashes.

In the year four hundred and twenty-eight, Nestorius, a learned and eloquent monk of Syria, was installed into the patriarchal see of Constantinople. In his first sermon before Theodosius, he proclaimed the exclusive and virulent temper of his zeal: "Give me, O Emperor!" said the ardent enthusiast, "give me the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you in exchange the kingdom of heaven. Assist me to exterminate the heretics; and I will assist you to exterminate the Persians."

The preacher added to the power of oratory

the force of example. The Arians had provided for themselves an obscure house for worship, in a retired part of the city; they were soon apprized of what they had to expect from the pastoral care of the new patriarch, and in the wildness of their despair and vexation, set fire to their conventicle. The flames spread to the adjoining houses, and the conflagration procured Nestorius the surname of *firebrand*. The Novatians and Quartodecimans were afflicted by the rancour of the patriarch; and the young emperor was obliged, out of regard to the safety of his capital, to impose restraints on the zeal of his spiritual father. The persecution, commenced by Nestorius, was far more extensive in its progress, than the sphere of his personal labours; for the bishops of the east well knew, that to render themselves pleasing to the eyes of their pontiff, they must conform not only to his commands, but also to his wishes. Antony, bishop of Germa, persecuted the Macedonians of his diocese, with so much diligence, that he totally exhausted their patience, and lost the reward of his services, together with his life.

It is probable, that nothing was more distant from the mind of Nestorius, while busy in oppressing and exterminating heretics, than the thought that his own heretical opinions would, ere long, expose him to the various and complicated sorrows, which await the captive and the exile.*

* Were the most sanguine persecutor to pause, and suppose

Anastasius, a presbyter of Constantinople, delivered a discourse, in which he reprobated the upstart custom of calling the virgin Mary, *the mother of God*; and maintained, that since the human nature only of Immanuel, could be related to an earthly parent, she ought rather to be called *the mother of Christ*. Nestorius heard, approved, and defended, both by his voice and his pen, the sentiments of Anastasius: the portentous sounds of heresy and blasphemy, disturbed the slumbers, and roused the energies of monks and bishops; the east and the west united in the chase; and the high spirited patriarch was soon caught in the toils in which he had delighted to catch others.

himself the *patient* in the room of being the *agent*, it is impossible that he should avoid detecting the inhumanity of his conduct, and the sophistry of his logic. Tertullian wrote a severe *Prescription against Heretics*, in which he avers that heretics ought not to be admitted to a scriptural disputation, because the scriptures do not belong to them, and that it is unnecessary to dispute with them in any way because they are not christians. Tertullian soon after became a Montanist; did *he then* think *himself* cut off from a title to the scriptures, and from the character of a christian? Mr. Betty, the learned translator of Tertullian, is so delighted with the good sense of the African polemic, in excluding the heretics from the use of the scriptures, that he expatiates on it in his *Preliminary Discourse*, and extends the idea, by affirming, that as the scriptures were given to the apostles and their successors, so also, the interpretation of the scriptures, is committed to them likewise.

See Tertullian's Prescription against Heretics, and the Apologetics of St. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, translated from their respective Originals, by Joseph Betty, M. A. Fellow of Ex. Col. Oxon.

Cyril, whose element was strife, despatched an exposition of the Nestorian heresy to Celestine, bishop of Rome, who was pleased to approve the sentiments of the primate of Egypt, though fraught with the errors of Appollinarianism,* and to condemn those of the Byzantine pontiff, though scarcely, if at all, diverse from his own. The same sentence which condemned the sentiments, degraded the person of Nestorius; but he was emboldened by the protection of Theodosius, to treat with contempt, the decision of the bishop of Rome and his Italian synod, and to appeal, from such dubious and partial authority, to the free deliberations of a general council. Ephesus was fixed on as the place, and the festival of Pentecost, as the time of meeting: the combatants mustered their forces, and brought into action not only the wisdom, but also, the wealth, and the muscular strength of their respective dioceses. Cyril, whose elastic conscience permitted him to second his malicious designs by fraudulent arts, opened the proceedings of the council before the arrival of John of Antioch, who advanced, with patriarchal gravity, from the distant capital of Syria, with a reinforcement of bishops for Nestorius.

* Appollinaris, bishop of Laodicea, was an able and active opponent of Arianism; but while he boldly maintained the essential divinity of the Messiah, he denied his perfect humanity, and represented the perfections of the divine nature as supplying the place of a human understanding.—*Socrates, Eccles. Hist. Book ii. Chap 36.*—*Mosheim, Cent. 4. Part II. Chap. v. 422.*

Candidian, the imperial minister, requested, in the name of his master, a delay of four days; but his request was denied, and the synod opened; Cyril occupied the seat of judgment; Nestorius was condemned and degraded by the votes and curses of the council; and the triumph of the day was crowned by the illuminations and festive revelry of the night. Five days after, the patriarch of Antioch arrived, and called a second synod which condemned Cyril, as a monster born and educated for the destruction of the church; proved that his twelve anathemas against Nestorius were charged with the poison of Appollinarian error; and pronounced on him a sentence of degradation from his ecclesiastical honours. Memnon, bishop of Ephesus, who had espoused the cause, shared the fate of Cyril, and a vigorous effort was made to supply his place with a more faithful pastor. But Memnon had used the precaution of garrisoning the cathedral, and the soldiers of Candidian who attempted to gain forcible possession of the sacred fortress were repulsed with loss, and the city was polluted with scenes of faction and bloodshed. The tidings of these outrages distracted the mind of Theodosius, and caused him to dissolve the synod with the solemn protestation, “*God is my witness, that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discern and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.*”

The repugnant sentiments and interests of the Egyptian and Syrian factions suspended, for a while, the doom of Nestorius; but his enemies were indefatigable, and his friends inconstant. John of Antioch coalesced with Cyril of Alexandria, and the court of Constantinople was subdued by the bribes and prayers of the orthodox monks and clergy. Nestorius, perceiving that it was vain to resist, aspired to the fame of a voluntary resignation of his patriarchal dignity, and requested permission to retire to the monastery at Antioch, in which he had spent his youth. His request was promptly conceded, but the arts of his enemies rendered his name increasingly unpopular; he had already sustained the infamy of being ranked with Judas; and after the lapse of a few years, Theodosius was prevailed on to subscribe an edict, which classed him with Simon the sorcerer, pronounced his followers accursed, proscribed his doctrine, condemned his writings to the flames, and banished his person, first to Petra in Arabia, and afterwards to Ibis or Oasis, situate among the Lybian deserts. The solitary prison of Nestorius was subject to the governor of Thebais, who probably was a creature of Cyril's; for the inhuman orders of the governor, for the hasty and violent removal of the aged and infirm heretic from one place to another, under the sultry heat of a Lybian sun, seem very much like the suggestions of ecclesiastical malice and revenge. The accumulated sufferings of the unfortunate exile,

superinduced a disease, which gave his persecutors occasion to say, "*that his tongue, which had uttered heresy and blasphemy, was eaten by worms.*"* "Humanity," says Mr. Gibbon, "may drop a tear on the fate of Nestorius; yet justice must observe, that he suffered the persecution, which he had approved and inflicted."†

After seeing some of the finest provinces of his dominions overrun by the barbarians, Honorius took up his residence at Ravenna. About the same time, he was obliged, by the weakness of his government, to abandon Britain. But though unable to protect the state, he still persisted to defend the church. In the year four hundred and eight, he was induced by the sinister arts of Olympius to sign a warrant for the death of Stilicho, the bravest general, and the most experienced statesman of the western empire. It was by the friendly influence of Stilicho that Olympius had risen from obscurity and indigence to some situations of lucre and dignity; and immediately after the execution of his unfortunate patron, he was created prime minister in his room. Olympius affected to be exceedingly pious; he had such vene-

* Evagrius, Eccles. Hist. Book i. Chap. 7, has preserved some of the remonstrances of Nestorius against the barbarous treatment which he endured; but the savage historian insults the afflicted heretic, and, overlooking the cruelty of men, ascribes his sufferings to the immediate displeasure of God.

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. xlvij. 299.

ration for the sanctity of churches, that he would not suffer the head of his benefactor to be struck off, until he was decoyed from his sacred asylum; he excited the zeal and superstition of his feeble sovereign to enact additional laws against pagans, jews, and heretics; and wrote to the far famed Augustin to suggest to him such measures as might conduce to the prosperity of the church. It is probable that there was no man in the empire more forward to give instructions on this subject to an active disciple, who had the command of riches and strength, than the bishop of Hippo. While an unhappy victim to the errors of Manicheanism, the tender mind of Augustin would have been filled with sudden horror at the proposal of torturing heretics into the profession of the truth; but having washed himself from the pollutions of heretical pravity, and breathed for a short time, the pure air which encircles the throne of an orthodox bishop, the spirit of persecution entered into the venerable prelate, and he discovered, at once, that civil penalties and corporeal coercion, are of admirable efficacy for rousing the sluggish minds of sinners, and for quickening their steps in the way of salvation. The dutiful request of Olympius must have been very comfortable and exhilarating to the pastoral vigilance of Augustin. The infernal methods of conversion, which had been employed for several years against the Donatists, had thrown the whole province of Africa into such a state of confusion and anarchy,

that Honorius was constrained to suspend their operation, and to proclaim liberty of conscience. But such was the benevolence of the bishop of Hippo and of his orthodox subalterns, that they besieged the throne of their sovereign with importunate solicitations for the return of temporal chastisements, in order to rescue the deluded Donatists from eternal torments. The prayer of the African prelates was heard; and the evils of intolerance again afflicted that important province of the empire, until the Donatists, rendered infuriate by their sufferings, were delivered at once from the government and the persecution of the Roman emperors, by Genseric, king of the Arian Vandals.

The case of the Donatists shews with what facility an unforbearing and malignant spirit can elicit the most disastrous events from the most trivial causes. On the death of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, which took place in the year four hundred and eleven, a part of the clergy and people of Africa elected Cæcilian to the vacant see. Hereupon, seventy bishops of Numidia assembled, reprobated the hasty and disorderly manner in which Cæcilian had been elected, pronounced him unworthy of the episcopal dignity, and nominated Majorinus, a deacon of the church, to supply his place. Thus Cæcilian and Majorinus, became the rival primates of Africa; and the controversy was carried on with so much spirit, that there was soon a pair of hostile bishops

in each city. Such was the origin of a dispute which afflicted Africa with the calamities of faction and civil war, during a period of three hundred years. But as rivers frequently take their rise from inconsiderable sources, and accumulate a mighty mass of waters in their progress, so it was with the African schism; it was incessantly fed by the passions, the prejudices, the interests, and devices of persecuting princes and bishops; and hence it often swelled and bid defiance to all restraints, and sometimes swept before it the mounds and bulwarks of civil society, and buried friends and enemies in promiscuous destruction.

On the death of Majorinus, Donatus, who, from his learning and virtues, was surnamed the *Great*, was appointed his successor; and from this prelate, or from Donatus, bishop of Casæ Nigræ, who also was an able opponent of Cæcilian, the Numidian faction were called *Donatists*. The persecution of the Donatists is the more remarkable, as they held the same doctrines, and observed the same rites in their worship, as their adversaries. It would rather seem, that the delinquency of the Donatists consisted in their resembling their persecutors somewhat too closely; for the main charges alleged against them are, their presumptuously affirming, that *they alone* were the true and pure church of Africa; that Cæcilian, having been a merciless man, was not fit to be made a bishop; that Felix of Aptungus, who

consecrated Cæcilian, having been a *traditor* in the reign of Dioclesian, could not confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and that, therefore, those who were under the jurisdiction of Cæcilian, were destitute of all hereditary authority. On the strength of these premises, the Donatists refused to hold any religious communion with the catholics; when they received proselytes, they were careful to re-baptize them; when bishops came over to them from the Cæcilian faction, they rejected their first ordination as invalid, and ordained them afresh; and when they recovered possession of a church, which had been occupied by their rivals, they scraped the walls, scoured the boards, burned the altar, melted the plate, and threw the consecrated bread to the dogs. Which of the parties began these civilities, is not certain; but there can be no doubt but they were reciprocal, and that they were performed quite as much to gratify revenge, as to satisfy conscience.

Some writers, by no means despicable, have endeavoured to exonerate the Roman emperors and prelates, of the infamy and guilt of the intestine discord and violence which so long agitated Africa, and to transfer it to the Circumcellions, a desperate confederacy of fearless men, who undertook to plead the cause of the Donatists with force of arms. We have not the satisfaction of hearing the Donatists speak for themselves; but the genuine letters of Augustin, the fragments of authentic history, the undoubted edicts of succes-

sive emperors, and the obvious circumstances of the controversy, render it indubitable, that the calamities of Africa did not *originate* in the enormities of the Circumcellions. Had not fanaticism usurped the place of law and justice, it is not probable, that we should ever have heard of the atrocious cruelties of the Circumcellions. Not a word is said of the furious excesses of this banditti under the reign of Julian, who permitted the exiled Donatists to return to their country, and to enjoy the rights of men; and it is very remarkable, that Constantine himself, after trying every other expedient in vain, stopped the persecution which had been instituted to convert the Donatists, and proclaimed equal liberty, as the only means which could allay the angry passions of the Circumcellions, and terminate the bloody massacres which threatened universal desolation. Mr. Gibbon has given an impartial and luminous account of the formation and desperate achievements of this singular fraternity:—"The peasants who inhabited the villages of Numidia and Mauritania, were a ferocious race, who had been imperfectly reduced under the authority of the Roman laws; who were imperfectly converted to the christian faith; but who were actuated by a blind and furious enthusiasm in the cause of their Donatist teachers. They indignantly supported the exile of their bishops, the demolition of their churches, and the interruption of their secret assemblies. The violence of the officers of justice, who were

usually sustained by a military guard, was sometimes repelled with equal violence; and the blood of some popular ecclesiastics, which had been shed in the quarrel, inflamed their rude followers with an eager desire of revenging the death of those holy martyrs. By their own cruelty and rashness, the ministers of persecution sometimes provoked their fate; and the guilt of an accidental tumult precipitated the criminals into despair and rebellion. Driven from their native villages, the Donatist peasants assembled in formidable gangs on the edge of the Getulian desert, and readily exchanged the habits of labour for a life of idleness and rapine, which was consecrated by the name of religion, and faintly condemned by the doctors of the sect. The leaders of the Circumcellions assumed the title of captains of the saints; their principal weapon, as they were indifferently provided with swords and spears, was a huge and weighty club, which they termed an *Israelite*: and the well-known sound of "praise be to God," which they used as their cry of war, diffused consternation over the unarmed provinces of Africa. At first their depredations were coloured by the plea of necessity; but they soon exceeded the measure of subsistence, indulged without control their intemperance and avarice, burned the villages which they had pillaged, and reigned the licentious tyrants of the open country. The occupations of husbandry, and the administration of justice were interrupted; and as the

Circumcellions pretended to restore the primitive equality of mankind, and to reform the abuses of civil society, they opened a secure asylum for the slaves and debtors, who flocked in crowds to their holy standard. When they were not resisted, they usually contented themselves with plunder, but the slightest opposition provoked them to acts of violence and murder; and some catholic priests, who had imprudently signalized their zeal, were tortured by the fanatics with the most refined and wanton barbarity. The spirit of the Circumcellions was not always exerted against their defenceless enemies; they engaged, and sometimes defeated, the troops of the province; and in the bloody action of Bagai, they attacked in the open field, but with unsuccessful valour, an advanced guard of the imperial cavalry. The Donatists who were taken in arms, received, and they soon deserved, the same treatment which might have been shewn to the wild beasts of the desert. The captives died without a murmur, either by the sword, the axe, or the fire; and the measures of retaliation were multiplied in a rapid proportion, which aggravated the horrors of rebellion, and excluded the hope of mutual forgiveness.

Such disorders are the natural effects of religious tyranny; but the rage of the Donatists was inflamed by a frenzy of a very extraordinary kind; and which, if it really prevailed among them in so extravagant a degree, cannot surely be

paralleled in any country, or in any age. Many of these fanatics were possessed with the horror of life, and the desire of martyrdom; and they deemed it of little moment by what means or by what hands, they perished, if their conduct was sanctified by the intention of devoting themselves to the glory of the true faith, and the hope of eternal happiness. Sometimes they rudely disturbed the festivals, and profaned the temples of paganism, with the design of exciting the most zealous of the idolaters to revenge the insulted honour of their gods. They sometimes forced their way into the courts of justice, and compelled the affrighted judge to give orders for their immediate execution. They frequently stopped travellers on the public highways, and obliged them to inflict the stroke of martyrdom, by the promise of a reward, if they consented, and by the threat of instant death, if they refused to grant so very singular a favour. When they were disappointed of every other resource, they announced the day on which, in the presence of their friends and brethren, they should cast themselves headlong from some lofty rock; and many precipices were shewn, which had acquired fame by the number of religious suicides.”*

The reader will do well to remember, that we are indebted to the enemies of the Circumcellions, for the documents which supply materials for their

* Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. Chap. xxi. 396.

history. The love of life, implanted in the nature of man, is so powerful, and of such universal operation, that it may be very justly questioned, whether any set of human beings *could* trifle with its instinctive impulse, in the manner here represented. That a posse of infuriate peasants should retaliate, in bloody deeds, the injuries sustained by the religion they professed, is altogether credible, because it is natural; but that they should turn their deadly rage against their own lives, and thereby incapacitate themselves for supporting a cause to which they were devoted, and for destroying enemies whom they abhorred, seems more like a caricature than a portrait.

Instigated by the urgent entreaties of the clergy, Honorius resumed the persecution of the Donatists in the eleventh year of this century. Marcellinus, the tribune, was sent to Carthage, as imperial commissioner, to examine the controversy, and to pronounce sentence against the schismatics. "Three hundred bishops, with many thousands of the inferior clergy, were torn from their churches, stripped of their ecclesiastical possessions, banished to the islands, and proscribed by the laws, if they presumed to conceal themselves in the provinces of Africa. Their numerous congregations, both in the cities and in the country, were deprived of the rights of citizens and of the exercise of religious worship. A regular scale of fines, from ten to two hundred pounds of silver, was curiously ascertained, according to the dis-

inctions of rank and fortune, to punish the crime of assisting at a schismatic conventicle; and if the fine had been levied five times, without subduing the obstinacy of the offender, his future punishment was referred to the discretion of the imperial court.*

Is it in the least surprising, that the Donatists should make bitter complaints of the cruelty of their enemies, or that the Circumcellions, who styled themselves the *vindicators of justice and the protectors of the oppressed*, should again brandish the *clubs of Israel*, and diffuse terror and dismay through the provinces, by their shouts of rebellion and revenge? Nor is it strange that when any of the legal oppressors of the Donatists fell into the hands of their frantic avengers, they should writhe and expire under ingenious tortures suggested by incensed hatred.

In some of the principal towns of Africa, where it was not in the power of the Circumcellions to obstruct the execution of the imperial laws, great numbers of the Donatists conformed to the church, to avoid the intolerable misery which otherwise was inevitable. We are at a loss to conceive how the sight of so many captives, compelled to sacrifice at the shrine of uniformity, to save themselves from temporal ruin, could induce the bishop of Hippo to lay aside the principles and character of a christian, to assume those of a persecutor.

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chap. xxxiii. 14.

After the death of Honorius, which took place in the twenty-third year of this century, and under the minority of Valentinian the Third, Boniface was governor of Africa. This general, who had already signalized his bravery by the defeat of Ataulphus, and his fidelity by adhering to the cause of the hereditary sovereign in a time of general defection, was rewarded by the grant of unlimited power in the province entrusted to his care. By the insidious arts of Aetius, who was unwilling that any officer of the western empire should be treated with greater esteem and honour than himself, Boniface was brought into disgrace, and declared a public enemy. To defend himself against the forces sent to divest him of his authority by Placidia, who governed in the name of her son, Boniface had recourse to the dangerous expedient of inviting the friendship and assistance of the Vandals, who occupied the province of Andalusia in Spain. These martial adventurers, whose propensity for migration was rendered natural by their erratic habits, readily acceded to the proposed alliance; and having collected their wives and children and baggage, crossed the narrow straits of Gibraltar, under the command of Genseric. The king of the Vandals, who stands in the first rank among the enemies of the Roman empire, is described as a man of a low stature, and a hardy constitution; as an enemy to pleasure and luxury, but a slave to ambition; and as equally fierce and

impetuous in war, and calm and deliberate in policy. When Genseric mustered his troops on the shores of Africa, they did not amount to more than fifty thousand effective men; but he soon received important accessions of strength from the woods and fastnesses of Mauritania. The scattered Donatists, who had taken refuge in remote deserts, from the persecuting edicts of the Roman emperors, were happy to unite under the standard of a chief, who, while he professed the christian religion, was a declared enemy to that church, by whose intolerance they had been aggrieved. The progress of the Vandals was marked by the march of desolation, over those cultivated and fertile districts which skirted the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and which merited for Africa, the respectable title of the *granary of Rome and of the world*. Augustin, who had approved and stimulated the persecution, which had subjected some of the Donatists to the authority of the church, and stung many of them into insurrection against the government, had the happiness to expire, while Genseric was laying siege to the walls and fortifications of Hippo.

The Vandals are accused of sullyng the splendour of their African conquests, by the exercise of the most savage and wanton cruelty towards the professors of the imperial religion. The chalybeate heart of Genseric rendered him a fit instrument for doing to the catholics, as they had

done to the Donatists; and it is probable that he soon imbibed a portion of the theological rancour which had been excited and propagated in Africa, by the intolerant laws of the emperors, and the tumultuous passions of fanatics. It is not unlikely, however, that some of the outrages, the infamy of which is bestowed on Genseric, were perpetrated by the officious resentment of the sectaries, who were too forward to revenge their past sufferings. But of all the Vandal princes, Hunneric, the worthless son and successor of Genseric, was the most terrible in his proceedings against the Athanasian heretics. Great numbers of them were driven, like herds of cattle, amongst the savage Moors; such as held civil and military offices, were peremptorily required to conform to the regal religion, or suffer degradation from their employments, and banishment to the islands of Sardinia and Sicily; some were forcibly baptized by the Vandal clergy, and if they presumed to deny the validity of this violent and scandalous baptism, they were punished as apostates; and on others, heavy fines were levied, and the contumacy of such as refused to discharge the fine, was punished by the dislocation of their joints, or the amputation of the ears, the nose, or the right hand. But the schismatical bishops, who dared to raise their voice against the religion of their sovereign, were especially obnoxious to the artful malice of Hunneric. To break the strength

of these ringleaders of non-conformity, he called a synod at Carthage, under the pretence of settling the matters in dispute. To this synod repaired no less than four hundred and sixty-six bishops, devoted to the doctrines of Nice, and to the discipline of the catholic church. On their arrival at the place of meeting, they had the mortification to see an Arian prelate seated in the patriarchal throne, and to find themselves under the insulting control of military law. Of this numerous and respectable assembly of orthodox bishops, one suffered as a martyr, and one as a confessor; twenty-eight were so happy as to escape by flight; and eighty-eight eluded further hardships by submitting to the established religion. The rest were required to take an oath of allegiance to the young prince Hilderic, heir apparent to the throne; of these, the three hundred and two who complied were distributed through the various provinces of Africa, and the forty-six, who would not comply, were sent to the island of Corsica, to fell timber for the use of the royal navy.

But if the testimony of history, which ought to be rigidly correct, has not exaggerated the tyrannical acts of the inglorious Hunneric, he filled up the black catalogue of his crimes, with a deed of superlative cruelty. There flourished at this time at Tipasa, a maritime colony of Mauritania, a congregation of christians, remarkable for their

zeal in the *homousian* cause. An Arian bishop was sent to instruct and convert them; but such as could procure ships crossed over to Spain, and the rest, regardless of the missionary, obstinately persisted in their former faith and worship. It immediately occurred to Hunneric, that, as the sullen schismatics were resolved not to receive instruction, it became imperative to wake their stupid minds, by inflicting pain on their bodies; and he forthwith despatched a military officer, who collected them in the forum, and in the presence of many spectators, deprived them at once of their tongues and their right hands.* The savage Hunneric gravely pleaded in defence of the intolerance, which has rendered his memory odious, *the laws and example of the Roman emperors*; and it must be confessed, that if the casuistry which justified the persecution of the Donatists and Arians was right, that which sanctioned the oppression of the Athanasians, was not very wrong.

* On this occasion, was wrought that stupendous miracle in favour of the Nicene faith, which is mentioned by most historians. *The tongueless sufferers still continued to speak, and to proclaim aloud the divine majesty of the Saviour of the world.* This astonishing prodigy, is attested by Victor of Ulica and Æneas of Gaza, who examined their mouths and heard them speak. It is worthy of note, that while Doctor Middleton denies the *miracle*, he does not deny that the *fact* was in the main as is represented.

Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, 184.

The life and reign of Valentinian III. which were replete with ignominy, ended together in the fifty-fifth year of this century. He was the last emperor of the house of the great Theodosius. During the twenty years which elapsed between the death of Valentinian and the deposition of Augustulus, the Roman sceptre passed through the hands of nine emperors, whose names it is not necessary to mention. Augustus, or Augustulus, son of the patrician Orestes, was scarcely invested with the purple, when the barbarians who were in the pay of the empire mutinied, and demanded, as a recompense for their services, the third part of the lands of Italy. Orestes, who governed in the name of his son, rejected the unreasonable demand of the mercenaries, who immediately revolted, and made choice of Odoacer as their general. Under the command of this popular and able leader, the barbarians laid siege to Pavia, by the strong fortifications of which, Orestes sought to defend himself; the town was soon compelled to yield to the assault of the besiegers, and to deliver up Orestes to their mercy. The barbarian chief ordered the execution of Orestes, but spared the life of Augustulus, out of respect to his youth; and after having stripped him of the ensigns of imperial dignity, allowed him a secure and handsome subsistence at the castle of Lucullus in Campania. The western empire and its ancient

metropolis, which gave law to the world for so many ages, were now at the disposal of a military adventurer, of whose family and nation, scarcely any thing is known. Odoacer rejected the name and honours of a Roman emperor, and caused himself to be proclaimed king of Italy; and thus failed, twelve hundred and twenty-nine years from the founding of Rome, the very *name* of an empire in the west.

We commonly ascribe the subversion of the Roman empire to the daring and impetuous prowess of those fierce adventurers, who issued in successive shoals from the frozen regions of the north. But to any one who views attentively the gradual decay of that stupendous fabric of political greatness, which was cemented by the wisdom of so many legislators, and the blood of so many heroes, it will appear evident, that the radical causes of its ruin existed in itself. The genius of Rome was humbled in the dust; the animating consciousness of freedom and glory, had given place to servility and shame; effeminacy and oppression had dried up the sources of national strength and riches; the imbecility of men had ceded the reins of government to the ambition of women; the wealth which should have stimulated the exertions of the industrious was conferred on the idle; agriculture was notoriously neglected; those who ought to have been employed in tilling the plains, were busy in work-

ing miracles on mountains; unity and concord, without which the greatest empire is but an incoherent mass of corruptible materials, were banished by persecution; and the destruction of peaceable heretics, was become an object more worthy of the civil and military powers of the empire, than the discomfiture of hosts of warlike Goths and Huns and Vandals.



JOHN BULL, Printer, Waterford.

ERRATA.

Preface, page xi. for Albigenes, *read* Albigenes.

——— page xiv. (Note,) for Flascalans, *read* Tlascalans.

Page 199. for Irenaus, *read* Irenæus.

Page 401, for remittance, *read* resistance.

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